

INSPECTION REPORT

DINNINGTON COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Dinnington, Sheffield

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106958

Headteacher: Mrs J Nicholson

Reporting inspector: Mr R C Drew
7281

Dates of inspection : 5 - 9 November 2001

Inspection number: 193278

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Doe Quarry Lane
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Sheffield
South Yorkshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs M Carroll

Date of previous inspection: 7 April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7281	R. Drew	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9710	R. Burgess	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18447	R. L. Cohen	Team inspector	History	Sixth form co-ordinator
16950	C. Orr	Team inspector	Modern languages	
14596	A. Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Religious education Equal opportunities Special educational needs	
4689	M Christian	Team inspector	Art and design	
31100	G. Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12048	R. Patterson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
19586	W. Easterby	Team inspector	English	
10564	J. Tomlinson	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
21866	D. C. Tracey	Team inspector	Science	
11975	T. McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music	

17709	A. Giles	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a large 11 to 18 comprehensive with 1378 pupils on roll, including 161 sixth-form students. It serves a very varied catchment, being situated within a former mining village, but also receiving pupils from nearby commuter settlements. Virtually all pupils are white and none uses English as an additional language. While the proportion of pupils claiming free schools meals is below average, at 14 per cent, all other indications suggest that the school serves a community experiencing significant social deprivation. Pupils enter the school with equally varied prior attainment. Widely used national assessment tests indicate that while there are some, but fewer than average, very high-attaining pupils entering the school, there are more lower attainers than average. On balance prior attainment is below average, especially in pupils' literacy skills. However, the number of pupils on the special educational needs register, at 194, and the proportion with statements of special educational need, at 1.5 per cent, are both lower than national averages.

Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher and restructured the senior management team. Significant new accommodation has been opened and the school has begun to participate in a range of national initiatives, including the Excellence in Cities programme.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a rapidly improving school with many strong features, some of them very good. Good teaching and good overall leadership and management are characteristic. Pupils' standards of attainment match national averages, indicating good achievement; standards of behaviour are also good. Given that the spending allocation per pupil is below average, this represents good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher and senior management colleagues is very good.
- The overall standards of provision are very good in religious education, classics, media studies and vocational education; they are good in English, science, geography and physical education.
- Teaching and learning are good across Years 7 to 11 and teaching is very good in the sixth form.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and students' attitudes in the sixth form are very good.
- The school provides very good support and guidance for pupils.
- Progress made by pupils between entering and leaving compulsory schooling is good, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards have improved noticeably over the last three years for pupils of all ages.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment are below average at the end of Year 9 in design and technology, art, history, ICT (information and communications technology) and music. They are below average at the end of Year 11 in business studies, Spanish, art and design and cross-curricular ICT.
- Management is unsatisfactory in design and technology, history, music and in business studies and ICT.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning by Heads of Department is not satisfactory.
- Attendance is below average, especially in Year 11.
- While ICT has improved, there is still too little hardware and software for adequate access by all pupils.
- The curriculum fails to meet statutory requirements in: ICT across Years 7 to 11 and in design and technology in Year 9.
- The external condition of accommodation in many parts of the school is very poor. Space for the library and the growing sixth form is far too limited.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school as a whole has improved well since the last inspection. Much improvement has occurred within the last two years.

Key issues in the 1997 inspection report focused on weaknesses in developmental planning, assessment arrangements, literacy policy and provision of sex education and drugs awareness. On all of these there has been marked improvement. Indeed, planning and assessment have been transformed. In addition, the previous inspection report found that ICT provision and the curriculum in physical education at Key Stage 4 were unsatisfactory. While some gains have been made here, improvement has not been adequate. Too little change has been brought about in the Act of Worship arrangements, in provision for sixth form religious education and in ensuring a clear timetable for homework in Years 7 to 9.

There has been substantive improvement in both leadership at senior management level and in teaching, although these were not key issues at the last inspection

Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A level/AS level examinations. Grades are based on 2000 results as national comparisons for 2001 were not available at the time of inspection.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	D	D	C	C
A levels/AS levels	D	B	D	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils enter the school with below average prior attainment. By the end of compulsory education in Year 11, GCSE results match the national average for all schools. This represents good achievement. Achievement is marked in Years 7 to 9, where pupils overcome much of their initial deficit in knowledge and skills in Year 7 to match the combined national standards in English, mathematics and science tests by the end of Year 9. In 2000, mathematics results were just below average, while the other two core subjects were average. When compared with similar schools, English results are above average, those for science are average and those for mathematics remain below. Results for 2001 show a marked rise in all three core subjects, placing the school's standards noticeably above the national average for the previous year.

At the end of Year 11, pupils' GCSE results match the national average for all schools. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, sustaining and consolidating the good progress made in Years 7 to 9. Compared with results in similar schools, standards are generally average. Since the last inspection, the trend has been for passes at A* to C to match national averages for all schools, but to be well above standards in similar schools. At the same time, candidates' D to G grade pass rate has been well below what is achieved in similar schools. Results for 2000, and even more so for 2001, show a very marked rise in the A* to G pass rate as well as in overall point scores. The school has exceeded its targets for 2000 and 2001 in terms of five A* to C passes and overall points scores. It also meets its targets for A to G passes. Particularly good results are consistently obtained in some subjects: in 2000, standards were above average in religious studies and French and above average in single science. Results were well below average in business studies and physical education and below average in history and art.

Pupils with special educational needs and those deemed gifted or talented make good progress across Years 7 to 11. Girls, unusually, perform less well than boys across Years 7 to 9. The school is aware of and beginning to take action on this issue.

Standards in the sixth form are broadly in line with national averages. 2001 results continued an upward trend started in 2000. The standard of students' work seen during the inspection also confirmed that improvement is well established.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The great majority of pupils are positive about school and keen to take the opportunities it offers. Attitudes are especially good in the sixth form.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in lessons and around school is predominantly good. Much of it is very mature and pleasant.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are given considerable scope for becoming increasingly confident, good at working with others and becoming aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good: pupils appreciate the commitment of staff and respond well. Relationships between pupils are also good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Overall, attendance is below the national average. Amongst Year 11 pupils, it is well below average and adversely affects their attainment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching and learning in the school as a whole are good. A high proportion of lessons seen during the inspection had good or very good teaching and a few had excellent teaching. Overall, in only a small minority of lessons is teaching less than satisfactory. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good across Years 7 to 11, but the teaching of music is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Learning follows a similar pattern to teaching across Years 7 to 11. In the sixth form, teaching is very good and the students' learning in lessons is also very good. Outside lessons, students' own independent study is less effective and they do not always attain results in examinations that reflect the very high quality of their efforts in class.

Teachers show good subject expertise across Years 7 to 9, while in Years 10 to 13 their knowledge and ability to communicate are particularly strong. The management of pupils is very good across all years. The teaching of literacy skills is good, but other basic skills, notably numeracy and ICT, are unsatisfactorily taught. In Years 7 to 9, pupils and parents are not made sufficiently aware of when homework is to be set and handed in. All other aspects of teaching are good.

Learning is good throughout the school. Pupils' positive attitudes and well-structured lessons ensure good pace and effort. Pupils are increasingly becoming aware of the standards they are reaching or need to strive for: this awareness is satisfactory amongst the youngest pupils, but good in Years 10 and 11 and very good in the sixth form.

Pupils with special educational needs and those deemed gifted or talented learn well across all year groups.

Teaching and learning are particularly strong in religious education, classics, media studies and the vocational education courses. In addition, teaching is very good in art in Years 10 and 11 and in

English, history, mathematics and art in the sixth form. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in ICT and music in Years 7 to 9.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broadly satisfactory. All National Curriculum subjects and religious education are present in Years 7 to 11, enhanced by good extra-curricular activities and good literacy provision. However, ICT and aspects of design and technology and religious education fail to meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory. The quality of support is good, but more classroom assistants are required.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Spiritual development is given satisfactory scope, but there is better than average encouragement of pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The systems and the personal approach of staff give pupils very good support and guidance. Academic progress is well monitored.

The school has established sound and improving links with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Leadership by the headteacher is very good, and she is given strong support by the senior management team. Year tutors and pastoral colleagues manage their responsibilities well. Overall, management of subjects is broadly satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and give good strategic support. Statutory duties need to be met regarding curricular provision involving ICT, design and technology, physical education and religious education.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. This area has only recently become an effective aspect of the school's work. The school development plan contains good priorities and the last two years have seen good improvement on many issues. There remains too little monitoring of teaching and of the work of subject departments.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Clear planning leads to a close match between spending and educational priorities.

The school is well staffed, but has accommodation that varies enormously in quality. Much is new, but many external areas remain in poor decorative order. In addition, the library and sixth form accommodation are both too limited. Resource levels, especially ICT equipment, are also below those of schools nationally.

Excellent use is made by the school of its option to seek the best value for money from different suppliers of services. Considerable improvements and savings have been made in catering and grounds maintenance as a result.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's expectations of their children. (96%) • Their children like school. (90%) • The fact that the school is very approachable. (88%) • Pupils' good behaviour. (86%) • The good leadership and management of the school. (86%) • The good progress their children make. (86%) 	<p>A very small proportion of parents were dissatisfied with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspects of homework. • How closely home and school work together. • The information they receive about their children's progress.

Inspectors fully endorse these very positive views about so many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors agree that homework arrangements, notably in Years 7 to 9, are not satisfactory. Liaison between home and school is satisfactory and inspectors note that a very high proportion of parents find the school approachable. The written information and the arrangements for consultation evenings for parents are, in the judgement of inspectors, good.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 161 students in the sixth form, which is growing in size. Year 13 has 59 students and Year 12 has 102. These figures reflect, respectively, the 40 per cent and 45 per cent of each year’s cohort who went on to sixth form study. The current Year 13 is unrepresentatively small, although it represents a good staying on rate from a very small year group. The school confidently expects to attract 50 per cent of future years, thus guaranteeing a sixth form of about 200 students. In both the current Years 12 and 13, girls are more numerous than boys. There are very few students from ethnic minorities. This reflects the population of the catchment area. A good range of advanced courses is provided. These lead predominantly to GCE A level, but an increasing range of vocational courses is offered at Intermediate and Advanced levels. A small number of students attend some of their courses at the local FE college. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is in line with similar schools nationally.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful and is steadily expanding. Overall, pass rates and grade quality are in line with national averages and all students make at least satisfactory progress. Results show an improving trend in many subjects. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and the retention rate of students is very high. There are still some omissions in vocational provision, particularly in business studies and the performing arts, and there is a temporary small subsidisation of the sixth form, mainly from Key Stage 3 provision. However, the burgeoning numbers, together with the improving results and very good teaching in a school whose unit cost per pupil is amongst the very lowest in the country, means that the school’s sixth form provision is cost effective.

The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

Strengths

- Very good teaching which leads to good learning.
- The majority of students display very mature attitudes and response towards their work.
- Students’ personal development is carefully nurtured through good enrichment and extra-curricular programmes.
- Students are very well supported and guided.
- Good leadership of the sixth form ensures clear priorities for post-16 education.
- Very good provision, and well above average attainment, in media studies, health and social care and leisure and recreation.

What could be improved

- The curriculum is still failing to meet statutory requirements in religious education.
- There is insufficient provision of vocational courses and for enhancement in areas such as drama and the performing arts.
- Students lack adequate accommodation and facilities for private and independent study.
- The management of history and business studies is unsatisfactory.
- Standards are too low in design and technology, Spanish and history.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors’ action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Standards are high and students attain good results. Teaching is

	good with excellent lesson planning. Marking and assessment is thorough. There is a lack of suitable textbooks and course materials for A2.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Physics	Good. Standards are average. Teaching is consistently good and teachers have good subject expertise. There is rigorous assessment of students' work. Teachers have very supportive relationships with students. There is no formal monitoring of teaching in order to share best practice.
Chemistry	Good. Recent results have improved considerably and are now in line with national averages. Teaching is consistently good and this leads to students' learning. Assessment is rigorous and helps students understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Students are conscientious and hard working. They have insufficient access to ICT facilities.
Business Studies	Satisfactory. Results are below national averages, although standards seen in classes are in line with those found in similar schools. Teaching is good overall. Teachers emphasise appropriate standards for success, give helpful feedback to students and are rewarded with good student response. There is a lack of appropriate vocational courses. Management needs to be more rigorous.
French	Good. Results are above average. Teaching is good and lessons are planned well. Students in Year 13 speak French consistently and make good progress. However, in Year 12, the less talented students do not yet have individual learning targets.
History	Satisfactory. Results are below national norms but standards of attainment in classwork are in line with national expectations. Teaching is good overall and students have a mature and positive approach to their work. Year 12 students are good in oral work. There is a lack of research facilities for students. Management needs to be more rigorous.
Geography	Good. Results are below, but close to, national averages. Standards in class are average. Fieldwork aspects of the course are good. Teaching is good. Teachers make good use of their detailed subject knowledge to provide a considerable amount of material. Good relationships are a feature of the department, which is well managed. Target setting is in the early stages of development.
Information Technology	Satisfactory. Standards are below national norms, but achievement is good, and is very good in the use of ICT in media studies. Good teaching motivates students well. Assessment by individual teachers is meticulous. Access for Years 12 and 13 to the computers in the learning resource area is limited due to their use by other year groups.
English Literature	Good. Results are satisfactory. Teaching is very good and encourages students to think for themselves. Relationships are very good and marking is excellent. Students do not read extensively and do not always develop their ideas at length.

In other subjects, work was sampled. In music, students achieve well but there needs to be a deeper exploration of more experimental methods. Teaching is very good in religious education, classics and art and design, and students have a good cultural experience in these subjects as well as having ample opportunities to develop analytical qualities. Vocational courses are a strength of the school and teaching and learning are very good in health and social care, travel and tourism and leisure and

recreation. Inspectors saw good combinations of vocational and academic subjects. For example, many students enhanced their progress in sports studies because of the work they did in areas such as community sports leadership and travel and tourism.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The educational and personal support and guidance are very good. There is good rapport between students and their tutors. The quality and accessibility of information, guidance and advice are very good. Careers guidance is good. Students appreciate the quality of the advice and support they receive.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Senior staff have worked hard to create a wide-ranging curriculum, good quality of teaching, study and social facilities and a caring but challenging ethos. Against this background, the progress of students is carefully monitored. The leadership is aware of the challenge to themselves set by the issues of widening the curriculum with the inclusion of religious education and a broadening range of vocational subjects, particularly but not exclusively in the areas of business studies, drama and the performing arts.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high quality of teaching they receive. • The encouragement and help they are given. • Opportunities to work independently. • A safe and secure environment. • The good extra-curricular programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of subjects, particularly drama and the performing arts. • Larger study areas with greater access to ICT facilities. • Larger social areas to reflect the growing numbers in the sixth form.

Inspectors closely concur with the students' views about life in the sixth form. They also concur about students' views concerning the lack of access to ICT facilities. The quality of most teaching and the care and help that students receive are of a high order. The school provides a safe and secure environment in which students feel valued. The students rightly praise the extensive extra-curricular programme but they are equally correct in their views that the overall curriculum in the sixth form should be widened to include a broader range of vocational subjects. Inspectors agree, too, that the successful growth of the sixth form is highlighting the problems of accommodation, particularly in independent study areas.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a wider range of prior attainment than is common, but on balance standards are below national averages. Widely used national assessment tests show that incoming pupils are particularly lacking in the literacy skills that underpin so much learning.
2. The school does well to help pupils to reach broadly national average standards by the time they leave school. Recent GCSE and GNVQ Foundation results for Year 11 pupils matched the national averages for A* to C passes and for pupils' points scores. Compared with schools with a similar intake, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C passes (46.6 per cent in 2000) was above average. In 2000 and again in 2001, the school exceeded the targets set for it by the local education authority for A* to C grades and points scores. However, Year 11 pupils generally reach well below average standards for the proportion of candidates achieving five or more A* to G grades. Targets for this area of attainment were below national averages but they were met both in 2000 and in 2001, with significant improvement taking place in 2001: the proportion rose from 81 per cent – its usual level since 1997 – up to 86.4 per cent in 2001.
3. By the end of Year 9, pupils' standards in National Curriculum tests match the average for all schools. This has been the case for the last six years and indicates that pupils make good achievement across Years 7 to 9, since they enter the school with below-average standards. Compared with results in similar schools, this school's results at the end of Year 9 are above average, confirming that good progress is being made. English and science standards have been average in tests over the last three years, but, in mathematics, standards have been below average. Results in 2001 show a noticeable improvement in all three subjects, with mathematics now in line with last year's national figures and English and science exceeding them. In work seen during the inspection, the overall standards in the current Year 9 are broadly average, but a significant minority are reaching higher standards.
4. Amongst the other subjects of the curriculum, the collective standard of work in Year 9 is average. However, pupils consistently reach above-average standards in religious education and classics and below average ones in music and history. In ICT, because provision is still seriously limited, pupils' standards are well below average. Literacy and numeracy standards are broadly average across Years 7 to 11.
5. The standards of Year 11 work seen during the inspection were, on balance, average. With a significant minority of subjects revealing work of above-average standards and none clearly below average, the overall performance of current Year 11 students is slightly better than previous Year 11s have achieved in examinations. This would confirm the upward trend in overall performance, begun in 2000 and reinforced by the strong 2001 exam results. Some subjects have produced particularly good results in most recent years. In 2000, for example, standards were above average in religious studies and French and above average in single science. Results were well below average in business studies and physical education and below average in history and art. Results for 2001 indicate a marked recovery for physical education candidates and some improvement in art and design and in business studies. However, Spanish and history standards remain too low. Science and English language results in 2001 were also significantly lower than predicted by the school.
6. Across Years 7 to 9, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. In lessons across the range of subjects, progress for these pupils is largely good, but in some cases, such as music and ICT, it is unsatisfactory. Pupils who have statements of special educational needs make good progress. Pupils deemed gifted and talented also make good progress. This success is because teachers are skilful at recognising the needs of pupils with a wide range of aptitudes and interests and provide suitably challenging and supportive work for them.

7. In Years 10 and 11, pupils with SEN and gifted and talented pupils again make good progress. Pupils as a whole learn well in lessons across these two years, but the standards they reach at the end of Year 11 represent sound rather than good achievement. Each year, too many Year 11 pupils are absent in the crucial phase of revising and consolidating knowledge and at a time when course work is being handed in and final examinations taken. The overall GCSE results suffer, especially in terms of A* to G passes and average point scores. However, over the last two years, a marked improvement has taken place. Candidates taking GCSE or part 1 GNVQ courses in 2000 reached a higher A* to G pass rate than in most previous years, and a better points score. The 2001 results show an even greater margin of improvement. These positive developments reflect a range of measures put in place by the current headteacher and pursued with good effect by the majority of departments. They include the close monitoring of underachieving pupils and the vastly improved use of assessment data to gauge current performance and set appropriate targets for all pupils. Attendance amongst Year 11 pupils has also risen following even greater efficiency in a range of strategies applied to poor attenders. The curriculum has been slightly modified to allow more pupils to follow vocational education courses. These measures have helped both attendance and motivation amongst a significant minority. Collectively these changes have brought about a greater awareness of the needs of middle and lower attainers and enabled the school to maximise achievement for such pupils. While there is a clear awareness of girls' underperformance compared with that of boys, no specific strategies are yet in place to rectify the problem. The school continues to be successful in helping higher attainers reach high standards.

Sixth form

8. Students' results at the end of Year 13 have been just below the national average for most years since the last inspection. Taking the 1998 to 2000 results together, for instance, the school's A level points score has been 15.7, compared with 17.9 nationally. Given the GCSE results that these candidates achieved two years earlier, this represents satisfactory progress. Results for 2001 are considerably better, with the school's average points score now at 17.3. Overall, learning in lessons is a strong feature in the sixth form, but this does not yet translate into the high-quality results that might be expected. Part of the explanation lies in the inadequate facilities for sixth form private study and research in school. In addition, students do not consistently extend the knowledge they gain in school by sufficient independent work outside school hours. The sixth form curriculum has only provided vocational courses for very small numbers so far, despite their high quality: this under-use of such courses has limited the scope for improving individual students' standards, as well as those of the sixth form as a whole.
9. Results also vary considerably between subjects. In 2000 for instance, standards were well above average in media studies, physical education and all GNVQ courses, and this strong position was sustained in 2001 in media studies and GNVQ courses. Music and French also had above average results in 2000, although not in 2001. Most of the other subjects recorded average results in 2000 but in several, notably history, both English courses, mathematics, chemistry and business studies, results were below average. In design and technology and Spanish, students performed significantly below expectation. In 2001, design and technology and history students also performed significantly below expectation. Work seen during the inspection confirms recent examination performance in many subjects, but current Year 13 standards in mathematics have improved considerably and are now above average. While some year-to-year variation in standards is always likely within any subject, the high standards in GNVQ, biology, media studies and geography match equally good teaching and good post-16 management. The below-average standards in design and technology and history reflect ongoing shortcomings in management. There are variable year-to-year performances in business studies, chemistry, both English courses, French, mathematics and physical education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Overall, pupils have good, positive attitudes to school and their standards of behaviour are good. Pupils' ability to show initiative and demonstrate personal responsibility is good and relationships in the school are very good.

11. Pupils' attitudes to lessons are predominantly good throughout the school. In nearly three quarters of lessons seen, pupils' attitudes were good or better; in over half of the lessons seen in Years 7 to 11, attitudes were very good or better. Pupils try hard and formulate sensible answers to teachers' questions. Usually they listen well and are quiet and alert. They show a very good response to high expectations; this is particularly evident in religious education, music and classics. They appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities and participation is high, except by the current Year 7 pupils, who appear reluctant to become involved in sports coaching and competitions.
12. Behaviour in the school is good. Behaviour around the school, arriving and leaving, and in the dining area, is orderly. In lessons it is usually good. However, some lessons during the inspection were disrupted by silly, immature behaviour, resulting in noisy lessons that disrupted learning for all. Pupils generally respond well to their teachers. Fixed-term exclusions are high, but represent appropriately stringent responses to aggressive or abusive behaviour. In assemblies, and in conversation with adults, pupils are respectful and polite.
13. The school has a satisfactory absence of oppressive behaviour; bullying, sexism or racism are not evident. Although some bullying occurs, it is handled well and is not an issue for most pupils. In physical education lessons, there is a noticeable absence of bullying behaviour. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others, and show respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. They accept the sanctions imposed when they disregard the discipline code. They show suitable respect for equipment, books and displays of work.
14. Pupils' ability to show initiative and demonstrate personal responsibility is good. Relationships in the school are very good. Pupils work well together in pairs and in groups. Particularly good collaborative work was seen during a Year 9 geography lesson on the rainforest, and in physical education, where group work formed the focus of the lesson. Pupils in all year groups are represented on the School Council, but several pupils felt that their input to school decisions through the council was ineffective.
15. Attendance is unsatisfactory and below the national average. Unauthorised absences are above the national average. Holidays are taken in term time by a large proportion of pupils in all year groups, which affects learning and standards. In Years 7 to 9, between 40 and 50 per cent of pupils had holiday absence authorised; a quarter of Year 10 pupils and one in six Year 11 pupils were absent because they were on holiday. Some pupils are beginning to respond to the rewards given for good attendance and in the last year just over 10 per cent of pupils achieved attendance records of 100 per cent. In Years 7 and 9, about one fifth of pupils achieved 100 per cent, whilst in Year 11 only about 6 per cent did so.
16. Most pupils are punctual to lessons, which during the inspection started promptly. Those who do arrive late are not always challenged to give a reason.
17. Since the last inspection, good attitudes, behaviour and relationships have been maintained. Attendance remains unsatisfactory, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Sixth form

18. In the sixth form, students have very positive attitudes to school. They enjoy their courses, are well motivated and clearly involved in their work. They are hard working and diligent. Their behaviour is exemplary. In three quarters of the lessons seen, students' attitudes were very good or excellent. Their commitment to extensive study outside school hours is, however, less strong. They have very good relationships with staff, their peers and younger pupils in the school. They act responsibly in helping Year 7 pupils to settle, and publish a newspaper for them. Several students assist with paired reading. There is a good participation in a community sports leader award; as part of their course students arrange inter-form and school competitions and help in lessons.
19. They have good personal and learning skills. They are tenacious and hard working, and show themselves capable of good critical self-analysis, particularly in music and in art, where they select pieces of their work for display and for inclusion in their portfolios.

20. Students are happy in the sixth form and have positive views about the experience that it affords them. They appreciate their teachers and the help afforded them in their choice of courses, and in study skills. They enjoy the enrichment activities on offer, both within the school and at the adjacent college.
21. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory. All students are reported to achieve rates of attendance of above 90 per cent. However, especially in English, it was noted that some students' attendance is erratic, resulting in a different teaching group being present each week.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. Teaching and learning for the school as a whole are both good. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, 97 per cent had satisfactory or better teaching, and learning closely matched teaching quality. About 6 per cent of lessons had excellent teaching, 35 per cent very good teaching, 38 per cent good teaching, 18 per cent satisfactory and in about 3 per cent it was unsatisfactory. This represents an improvement on the position in 1997, when the inspection reported about 95 per cent satisfactory or better teaching and 7 per cent in which the quality was very good. A crucial factor responsible for this is the high quality of appointments since the last inspection, since during this inspection a disproportionate share of the highest-quality teaching was accounted for by staff with five or less years service in the school.
23. Years 7 to 9 had broadly similar qualities of teaching and learning to that in Years 10 and 11. However, the lessons in Years 10 and 11 were more often good (43 per cent) than satisfactory (16 per cent), while in Years 7 to 9, both categories had the same proportion, namely 26 per cent. The pattern of learning showed the same similarities and differences. Teaching in the sixth form was, on balance, very good. Good or better teaching accounted for nearly 90 per cent of sixth form lessons. The proportion in the rest of the school was about 75 per cent. Learning in lessons in the sixth form was consistently very good, but this is not fully matched by the quality of independent study carried about by students.
24. Teaching and learning for pupils who have special educational needs is mostly good. However, one area of concern is that teachers do not share plans for lessons with learning assistants in advance. This means that the assistants rarely know what the lesson will be about, and therefore cannot prepare the focus for help until the lesson begins. Teachers mostly offer good support in lessons where there is no assistant, enabling pupils to make good progress. When assistants are present they also provide good, focused help. However, because there are eight assistants and three teachers, it is not possible to provide help in all the lessons where it is needed.
25. Across the school as a whole, nearly all aspects of teaching are at least good. The management of pupils is especially good and hinges on establishing very positive relationships and following closely the school's policy on positive encouragement and consistent use of sanctions when required. Subject expertise is good in Years 7 to 9 but is revealed as even more impressive in many GCSE, A level and vocational education lessons. While use of day- to-day marking and periodic assessment is good across Years 7 to 11 it is very good in the sixth form. Homework is not set and taken in with sufficient consistency in Years 7 to 9, so that pupils and parents are unable to anticipate and monitor its completion. Teachers are already good at integrating literacy skills into their lessons; numeracy skills are, on balance, satisfactorily taught, but basic ICT skills are unsatisfactorily promoted.
26. Pupils' learning, including that of pupils deemed gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, is consistently good. Their effort, pace of work, levels of interest and overall ability to acquire knowledge are all effective. In terms of knowing how well they are progressing, pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a satisfactory knowledge overall. Some are quite well informed about the levels or grades they are achieving and might expect to gain later on. Most, however, are not at that stage. In Years 10 and 11 pupils generally have a good awareness of how well they are doing and what is required to improve.
27. Teaching and learning are particularly strong in some subjects. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in religious education and in classics; in Years 10 and 11 very good teaching is typical in vocational education, art, religious education, media education and classics. While areas of high-

quality teaching in the different stages reflect the gifts of particular teachers, the subjects producing very good teaching across all year groups are also those with the best quality management in the school. Teaching is unsatisfactory in ICT across Years 7 to 11 because too little of the required knowledge and skills is taught. When ICT lessons occur, the teaching quality is satisfactory. Music teaching in Years 7 to 9 is too variable: while some lessons are taught well, others are not, and the overall position is unsatisfactory. In both subjects, management is unsatisfactory. The absence of leadership in ICT clearly has a negative impact on teaching, while in music, effective remedial action has not been taken to deal decisively with shortcomings in teaching.

28. More commonly, teaching and learning in the school are characterised by a range of strengths combining to produce impressive lessons. For example, in a Year 9 religious education lesson with very good teaching, there was a consistently brisk pace and a high level of challenge. The pupils' understanding of the five precepts of Buddhism was helped by the detailed and impressive subject knowledge of the teacher and the way new ideas were explained to them in terms that they could easily grasp. Rapid question and answer sessions ensured that pupils were clear about new material and were actively involved in the lesson. A Year 11 art lesson using works by Jackson Pollock to inspire clay work also had very good teaching. A clear, well-organised demonstration of techniques by the teacher involved pupils at every turn and this full participation ensured their high motivation.
29. A Year 9 geography lesson with excellent teaching moved along with very good pace, incorporating well designed tasks for the very wide ability range in the class. The teacher's excellent planning and very supportive manner encouraged all pupils to work successfully in groups as well as participate in whole-class discussion. Pupils were engrossed in their work and visibly enjoyed the lesson. Where teaching is satisfactory, but, with modest adjustments, could be good, the pace of the lesson and the clarity of objectives tend to be adequate, but lack the sharpness seen in the better lessons. Very occasionally, teaching is unsatisfactory, and here the basis for pupils' success in the lessons is not made clear from the outset and planning lacks sufficient clarity for all pupils to be challenged. This was evident, for example, in a Year 9 music lesson designed to develop keyboard skills.

Sixth form

30. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. No lessons seen during the inspection had unsatisfactory teaching and collectively good, very good and excellent teaching accounted for nearly 90 per cent of sixth form lessons. The proportion in the rest of the school was about 75 per cent. Learning in lessons in the sixth form was consistently very good, but this is not fully matched by the quality of independent study carried out by students. Over longer periods than individual lessons they are not consolidating and extending their knowledge quite as well, so that examination results do not entirely reflect the high quality of learning seen in lessons. Subject expertise is very good in both A level and vocational education courses. Use of day-to-day marking is very good, so that students are keenly aware of their current standards and those to which they should aspire.
31. Teaching and learning are particularly strong in some subjects. Both are very good in religious education, classics, vocational education, art, media studies, English, mathematics and history. It is good in virtually all other subjects and satisfactory in music. In many lessons teaching combines a wide range of strengths to good effect. For example, in Year 13, there was excellent teaching in a physical education lesson. Underpinning everything was an outstanding level of subject expertise on the part of the teacher, but the beneficial impact on students was secured by high-quality planning focused on an extensive use of role-play, and illustration using video clips. As a result learning was also excellent.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

32. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory and provides an adequate range of learning opportunities. In Years 7 to 9, all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught. In addition, classical studies is taught. However, there are some deficiencies. In the lower school, the only direct teaching of ICT is in Year 8. In Years 10 and 11, not all pupils are taught ICT. These arrangements do not provide sufficient time to cover the requirements of the ICT National Curriculum. In Years 7 to 9, not all the requirements of design and technology are covered and pupils have no opportunities to learn about control technology or pneumatics. However, there is good provision for the teaching of computer-aided design and manufacture.
33. The school does not meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
34. Curricular planning is generally satisfactory across all departments, but there is no well-established monitoring of schemes of work to ensure a cohesive and school-wide approach.
35. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a core curriculum and have some choice of other GCSE courses. There are courses in art, classics, geography, history, ICT, media studies, music, physical education, religious education and a second modern language. They are also able to follow vocational courses in health and social care, leisure and tourism and business. This programme provides a satisfactory range of opportunities and gives pupils a broad and balanced curriculum.
36. Pupils who have special educational needs are satisfactorily included into all that the school offers. Some are withdrawn for extra help and some have support within their own lessons. Support and provision carry on into the sixth form where it is necessary. Activities that take place out of school time, such as a homework club, are open to everyone, and there is a breakfast club reading partnership for pupils who need extra help.
37. Pupils who are gifted and talented have access to extension work and a higher challenge. For example, in Year 10 in a religious education lesson, the extension work widened the thinking about euthanasia, requiring work about the quality of life, examples of problems that may arise, and how to deal with them.
38. There are good strategies for teaching literacy skills, but those for the teaching of numeracy are insufficiently developed and are unsatisfactory.
39. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities. A late bus is provided on Monday to Thursday evenings to help pupils to participate in the range of opportunities. Many activities are available during the lunch break. There are the usual sports activities, which include: netball, badminton, gymnastics, dance, soccer, hockey and trampolining, and in addition a good programme of fixtures with other schools. Many subjects provide clubs, study activities and support for homework. Good support is provided through the 'Chill & Chat' sessions, bereavement support and the Christian Fellowship. The tutor time at the start of each day is not effectively or constructively used.
40. There is good equality of access and opportunity. Pupils are well supported through the learning support centre, where individual arrangements can be made to enable pupils to follow the curriculum. The links with the special educational needs staff and the learning mentor provide pupils with a safe and caring environment in which to pursue their studies. The breakfast club is a strength of the school and provides good links with reading activities.
41. The provision of formal personal, social and health education (PSHE) is unsatisfactory. There are newly appointed co-ordinators for Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, but they have had too little time to make much impact. The programme of study has been rationalised, but the development planning is very limited and does not provide a clear vision. Photocopied materials that supply some guidance to teachers cover most of the topics, but are somewhat restricting in approach. The team of teachers, whilst hard working and dedicated, is not constant and partly depends on other timetable demands. Sex education and drugs education are covered and pupils value these aspects. The monitoring of this area is yet to be effective.

42. The arrangements for careers education and vocational education are satisfactory. There are good links with the careers officer and topics are dealt with through the PSE programme. There are links with local industries and pupils make familiarisation visits. In Year 10, pupils participate in a well-organised work experience scheme.
43. There are very good links with local primary schools, Rother Valley College and local further education providers. The links with primary schools involve Dinnington teachers working with pupils in Year 6, which helps to ensure good curricular planning.
44. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and with effective opportunities occurring in a number of subject areas. By reading a passage in Gujarati, Year 11 pupils in an English lesson were able to imagine the difficulties of coping with a completely unfamiliar language. Very good displays of natural phenomena are found in geography, and in art pupils learn about religious symbolism related to use of colour and are encouraged to appreciate the still vibrant nature of the 500-year-old works of Archimboldo. In religious education, where pupils have time for reflection, incense sticks are lit to add to the atmosphere. During tutor times and in assemblies, pupils were encouraged to reflect on the significance of the sale of poppies. In assemblies, which are held weekly for most year groups, Biblical references are introduced in a context that promotes reflection and respect for the traditions of other faiths. A carol service is held annually in a local church. However, there is no daily act of collective worship, and the 'Thought for the week' is inconsistently featured during form time. Assemblies for Year 11 and the sixth form alternate and take place only once every two weeks. Because there is not yet a coherent policy for every subject, opportunities, such as the spiritual impact of reading the poetry of Keats, are missed.
45. The school's provision for pupils' moral education is good. Pupils are expected to co-operate and are taught the difference between right and wrong. In assemblies, moral issues are raised, and pupils from all year groups contribute to fund raising and other charitable initiatives. During the inspection, Year 8 pupils were collecting items for Christmas boxes for elderly people living alone in the community. The PSE programme provides opportunities for education about sex and drugs abuse, and in Year 11, pupils are able to listen to the experiences of young former drug addicts. Pupils are encouraged to develop high self-esteem. The school has an effective rewards system, and governors meet and congratulate individual pupils who have made commendable efforts in their work or in their contribution to the school community. Pupils with particular difficulties attend anger-management sessions. Within various subjects, pupils consider a range of moral issues. In geography, they learn about the problems associated with land development and the commercial interests of world trade, in English, a number of texts deal with moral dilemmas, and in physical education, positive attitudes of sportsmanship are promoted. The school library has a number of publications dealing with personal moral problems. The small amount of bullying that persists is dealt with firmly. Students in the sixth form organise fund raising for charity, support learning in other year groups and in their enrichment time become involved with support for elderly people within the community. However, there is no formal PSE programme for the sixth form.
46. There is good provision for pupils' social development. Form time is frequently used exclusively for social and administrative purposes. While this has social benefits, the full 20 minutes are not required to achieve them, and this practice also precludes any scope for spiritual development. The School Council consists of representatives from each year group, meets regularly and is involved in resolving issues raised by pupils. In subjects such as English, music, geography and physical education, pupils work together in groups, and visits out of school take place regularly. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in music, physical education and drama; pupils visit France each year, and the school's musicians toured The Netherlands in the summer.
47. Students in the sixth form help with events such as open evenings. There is a sixth form committee that organises theatre trips and the sixth form ball. Students also help to organise and participate in musical events, providing effective role models. The sixth form social area is too congested for the numbers using it.
48. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. As part of religious education, pupils visit a Buddhist centre, the cathedrals in Lincoln and York, and learn about festivals and celebrations of their own and other traditions. Schemes of work followed in music, art, modern languages and English collectively cover a wide range of work by eminent composers, artists and writers, and in

geography, pupils learn about life in other countries. Two modern languages are taught, and pupils in the Japanese group visited the Japanese embassy and students in the sixth form visit Paris. Pupils take part in national events: some have just entered the competition to compose a song for Children in Need. The school library provides a wide range of books about cultures and traditions of other people, and in music and art pupils also learn about other cultures. However, there is little other evidence of provision for multi-cultural education.

Sixth form

49. The sixth form curriculum provides a significant range of learning opportunities with many strengths but several limitations. As it stands it is unsatisfactory.
50. The curriculum has a good range of AS and A level courses that enables students to build on what they have achieved in earlier years. In addition, there is a choice from new courses in vocational areas such as business, leisure and recreation, health and social care and travel and tourism. The school is aware that its provision for vocational courses is still too restricted. There is evidence of a few students leaving at the end of Year 11 to take courses in other sixth forms or in the further education college. Currently there are discussions with Rother Valley College to provide closer links in order to enhance the curricular provision for sixth form students. The curriculum meets external requirements and is responsive to local circumstances, but the school has not yet implemented plans to provide more appropriate vocational courses to match the needs of all students. The arrangements for the teaching of religious education are not satisfactory and insufficient to fulfil the statutory requirements. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Students do not have an effective programme of personal, social and health education.
51. The provision for the teaching of key skills is good. Year 12 students make good use of the logbook provided to monitor their progress. In particular, good attention is paid to the development of communication skills, although the optional provision for extending students' ICT skills is used ineffectively.
52. There is a good programme of enrichment. Students can take AS level in critical thinking and in general studies. They have the opportunity for sports coaching and first aid. Year 12 and 13 students also organise social evenings for younger pupils. They provide some in-class support and help with paired reading.
53. There is good equality of opportunity that enables students to participate in a wide range of courses and extra-curricular activities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. The school makes good provision for the care of its pupils. There are established procedures to identify and handle issues related to child protection; staff are informed of their responsibilities by the designated teacher and in the staff handbook. The school receives inadequate support from the social services. Satisfactory procedures are in place to protect the health and safety of pupils and staff. Departmental procedures to assess risks are mostly very good. Clear guidelines are established to deal with first aid and minor emergencies. Routine checks are conducted at appropriate intervals to ensure the safe operation of electrical, fire prevention and other equipment. The open nature of the site creates some problems.
55. The school's monitoring of academic performance and personal development is good, and the educational and personal support and guidance available to pupils are very good. Pastoral care is very good and well informed by careful record-keeping. Tutors, heads of lower and upper schools, and heads of year are well informed about pupils' academic progress and personal development by a system of thorough monitoring procedures.
56. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Registration is efficiently conducted and data conscientiously collated, although manual systems are used. Pupils with good records of

attendance are rewarded appropriately. Attendance records are closely monitored to establish patterns of absence and the services of the educational welfare officer, who is based on the school site, are used well. Insufficient progress has been made in persuading parents to reduce the number of holidays authorised during the school term.

57. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The introduction of a positive discipline policy is clearly understood and generally used consistently throughout the school. There are a few teachers who have not adopted the full range of sanctions. Pupils and parents recognise the fairness of the procedures adopted. Use of the learning support centre is beginning to improve the behaviour and attendance of some pupils, but the level of fixed-term exclusions, which are used fairly, remains high. Specialists from a range of external services, such as behaviour support and the 'Get Real' multi-agency team, are used well to enable some pupils to continue their education in mainstream school. Part-time learning in school, alongside a work-related or college placement, is arranged for some pupils in Years 10 and 11. There is no evidence of oppressive behaviour in the school and pupils of all ages report that when bullying occurs it is dealt with swiftly and well.
58. Pupils who have special educational needs are well cared for. They are identified before they leave their junior schools, and the co-ordinator attends reviews of the targets for those who have statements of special needs before they leave Year 6. Assessment is an ongoing process and there are tests in Year 7 and again in later years when necessary. The results of these tests help to form appropriate targets for individual educational plans. Breakfast club, lunchtime sessions and homework club, while not being solely for special needs provision, do offer some help and social development for all who take part. There is a breakfast club reading scheme.
59. Gifted and talented pupils are also well cared for, and teachers provide good extension work for them to do, in most lessons.
60. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and academic progress and the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning are good overall, although significant weaknesses are apparent in some subjects. Pupils are assessed by the use of national tests and their performance is monitored against the attainment predicted by the analysis of this data. The performance of boys and girls is monitored. Targets are set for groups of pupils and for individual pupils in most subjects. In English, assessments and targets are linked to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9. In most subjects in Years 10 and 11 pupils are assessed in line with examination criteria. An effective mentoring programme is in place for pupils whose predicted grades fall in the C/D band and is being extended to help other groups. However, assessment is poor in ICT and in design and technology for Years 7 to 9. The assessment is often inaccurate, targets set are not achievable and superficial comments are made on pupils' work that are not related to nationally levelled criteria. Similarly, in music, success criteria are not linked to National Curriculum levels. Assessment data from the physical education department is not used satisfactorily in any year group.
61. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Very good primary liaison enables pupils to settle into their new school well, although the current Year 7 pupils retain a reluctance to become fully involved in the extra-curricular sporting activities offered. In addition to data on academic performance, tutors and heads of year maintain comprehensive but concise records for each pupil, monitoring aspects of school life including attendance, achievements, incidents, good news, and home contacts. The use of tutor time is too variable. Some are well used to promote a cohesive feel to the tutor group, but many are effectively an overlong social period at the start of the day.
62. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made in assessment procedures in art and physical education and in the use of assessment data in art. Greater consistency has been achieved in Years 7 to 9, although attainment data at national levels are still not used in all subjects. Senior management is now involved in assessment practice. In design and ICT, procedures to assess attainment and use of the data to inform future teaching and learning have not been put in place.

63. Significant improvements have been made in procedures to monitor personal development and to ensure consistently good behaviour. A wide range of strategies has been implemented to improve support for pupils with behaviour or learning difficulties. Tutor time is still not always used effectively.

Sixth Form

64. The educational and personal support and guidance for students in the sixth form are very good. There is a good rapport between students and tutors, which was evident in the student reviews taking place during the inspection. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory.

Assessment

65. There are very good procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress. Individual learning needs are well provided for. Assessment data is used well to guide curricular planning and there are good procedures in place to monitor and support pupils' academic progress. However, assessment of standards in physical education is not used well. Work is consistently marked and grades reported in line with examination criteria. Students are well informed about their progress and know their target grades. Teachers know their students well, enabling them to make good day-to-day assessments. This is especially true where class sizes are small, such as in modern languages.

Advice, support and guidance

66. The quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance provided to students, and their parents, are very good. They are given clear guidance should they find it necessary to change their chosen course early in their sixth form education. Guidance to complete UCAS forms is good. Careers education and guidance provided in the sixth form, to enable students to plan for future courses, study or career opportunities, are good. The school puts on a three-day presentation and guides them well through the range of university courses available, as well as helping them with specific information on other post-18 employment routes.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

67. The parents' view is that this is a good school and there was a good response to the Ofsted questionnaire. The responses, and the comments at the meeting, were positive about most aspects of school life. They indicated that most parents are particularly happy about the way the school expects their children to work hard to achieve their best, and they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. Most say their children make good progress. At the meeting, parents were positive about improvements to the school in recent years. Some parents have concerns about how closely the school works with them and feel that they are not sufficiently well informed about how their child is getting on. Many of their concerns were related to the change in arrangements for formal consultation evenings. Some parents were uncertain that the right amount of homework was set, since there is no homework timetable and the amount set seems very variable. Others felt that the planner was helpful.
68. The inspectors agree with parents about the positive aspects of school life and found minor concerns to be unfounded. They found the annual reports on progress to be satisfactory, and ample opportunities are made for parents to talk to teachers. While some parents are unhappy about the changed format of the consultation evening, 85 per cent of those responding to a questionnaire sent to them by the school prefer the new arrangements.
69. Overall, the school has satisfactory links with parents. Good information is provided and parents usually visit the school if there are concerns or problems. Parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory but the contribution they make to their children's learning at school and at home is unsatisfactory. The quality of information provided to parents in the prospectus and regular newsletters is good. Annual progress reports are satisfactory. In English especially, reports are well focused, with helpful comments on areas for improvement and clear targets to achieve this. In physical education, greater depth is needed in setting targets for improvement. Parents are not always contacted early enough about absences nor informed about incomplete GCSE assignments. Each year, a pack of information about school is mailed to parents, which ensures that the sometimes unreliable pupil post is not blamed for parents being ill-informed about school life. Whilst there is a clear timetable for interim and annual reporting to parents, with good opportunities for parents to consult form tutors and subject teachers, these opportunities are not used by all parents. Attendance has proved to be much higher at the longer tutor interviews than when several short interviews are arranged with subject teachers. At the last tutor interviews, 75 to 85 per cent of parents attended, whereas only just over half attended the more traditional subject consultations. Parents are routinely contacted if problems arise, and are welcomed into school should they have any concerns they wish to discuss. Parents are informed by letters of praise when their children achieve individual success. Pupils' planners provide an effective link.
70. Most parents attend annual reviews for pupils who have statements of special educational needs, and all parents' views are sought and recorded for these meetings. The quality of information for parents from the special needs department is generally satisfactory, although the targets in pupils' individual education plans are not shared with parents, nor are there targets for parents to be involved in at home.

71. However, details of the progress that pupils make on the computerised programme of learning in literacy and numeracy are sent home. Parents are also invited to attend reviews in these programmes, as well as half-yearly reviews of pupils' progress.
72. Parents' involvement in the work of the school overall is broadly satisfactory. The governing body has its full allocation of parent governors, but a very small number are actively involved in helping in school activities and in running the parent teacher association. The Dinnington School Association is successful in raising some funds to assist in the purchase of learning resources, including ICT equipment, library books and contributions towards individual pupils' special trips. However, only a few parents are actively and routinely involved in their children's education. Most parents visit the school when invited, and come to watch performances and concerts, and attend the awards evening when their children are involved. Most, but not all, parents sign a home-school agreement each year: the agreement sent to parents in October 2001 was showing a 70 per cent return at the time the inspection.
73. Since the last inspection, satisfactory links have been maintained with parents.

Sixth Form

74. Parents of sixth form students are very positive about the school. At the meeting, they were pleased with the progress their children had made throughout the school and liked the opportunities given for older students to help with extra-curricular activities. They felt that there was good behaviour throughout the school now. They feel that the headteacher has turned the school around, although they acknowledge that there is still plenty of change needed. They feel that communications with them and the profile of the school have been improved by the newsletters. They said the school put a lot of time and effort into dealing with their concerns. Several said they preferred the new system of parent consultations whereby they had a single long meeting with their child's form tutor, although others preferred to meet their children's subject teachers.
75. Parental contact in the sixth form is good. Their attendance at parents' evenings is good and they are welcome on many other formal and informal occasions. Reports follow a similar format to those in the main school but, in addition, students write a personal statement and set targets for themselves. Some of these targets are too general to set a specific course of action to achieve them.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

76. The school is well led and managed and has made good overall improvement since the last inspection.
77. Leadership from the headteacher is very good. Several key policy changes date from her arrival in 1999. These have led to marked beneficial changes in such areas as the use of assessment to raise standards, consistency in the use of rewards and sanctions by staff, and clarity in planning and use of monitoring to check progress towards agreed objectives. The headteacher has established a very strong sense of educational direction in the school. The school's aims are already well reflected in the work it undertakes and the values it promotes, and at every turn there is a clear commitment to equality of opportunity for pupils. Senior managers make a very strong contribution to leadership on these and other priorities. They act with considerable independence in developing the policy areas delegated to them, but are equally successful in keeping their colleagues fully informed as implementation progresses. Teamwork is good at this level.
78. Planning at whole-school level is very good. Relevant priorities are chosen and realistic and effective strategies are put in place to ensure that improvement takes place. The process of drawing up plans involves extensive consultation with staff and governors and takes note of parents' views as expressed in returns to questionnaires they are sent. Staff at every level are more aware than is usual of the focus of the school's plans and of the action required to implement them successfully. Funding is directed very efficiently to the priorities identified in the

school development plan, and additional funds or savings are pursued very effectively. For instance, the school has successfully bid into the government's "Excellence in Cities" budget to help to promote the work of gifted and talented pupils. The school is most adept at comparing costs and quality of provision from different sources. For example it has saved considerable sums on grounds maintenance by changing contracts. Another contractual choice – over school meals provision – has hugely increased the take-up of school meals. In turn, this has improved the scope for the school to provide viable lunchtime activities and to manage the behaviour of pupils effectively across the lunch hour.

79. Monitoring overall is satisfactory: the school is now good at evaluating progress and taking effective action if existing policy is inadequate. However monitoring of teaching is unsatisfactory. There is too little evidence of systematic monitoring having taken place until very recently. Within the last two years, appropriate arrangements have been put in place to monitor the curriculum, the success of planning and the effectiveness of staff. Senior managers have begun to monitor and support teachers and include an adequate sample of lesson observations in this process.
80. Formal 'Performance Management' arrangements allow heads of departments and other monitors to observe and review colleagues' work, but the process is at an early stage. In some departments it has long been supplemented by other types of monitoring, but this is the exception rather than the rule. There is too little systematic observation and reviewing of classroom work and departmental effectiveness.
81. The quality of middle management is satisfactory. The pastoral managers operate effectively and their systems for supporting and guiding pupils are very good. The leadership and management of subjects are too variable, however. Several are very well led, notably religious education, vocational education, media studies and classics. Leadership and management are good in English, geography, science, physical education and art and are broadly satisfactory in mathematics and modern languages. They are unsatisfactory in design and technology, history and business studies and poor in ICT. Management is unsatisfactory in music.
82. Leadership and management of the special needs department is good. Pupils who have specific learning difficulties are also well looked after and the provision is well organised. ICT is beginning to be used for administration, but is not yet fully developed. One very good addition to the department has been the work of the senior assistant, who deals with administrative matters in a most efficient way. Outside agencies are called upon when needed, and their support is used well to further the care and provision for pupils. The team of teachers and assistants is good and they all work together well for the benefit of the pupils.
83. The good overall improvement since the last inspection reflects a range of factors. Major areas of work that were key issues in the 1997 report have been tackled well under the leadership of the current headteacher, particularly the approach to planning and the use of assessment and target setting. In addition, good recent gains have been made on literacy provision and implementing sex education and drugs awareness policies. Some, but not enough, progress has been made on ICT provision and the physical education options in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, the positions on homework schedules, religious education in the sixth form and providing a daily act of worship are largely unchanged. Another important change, which was not a key issue, is the proportion of very good quality teaching. In 1997, very good or excellent teaching accounted for 7 per cent of lessons seen, while in 2001, the proportion had risen to 36 per cent.
84. Standards of provision for pupils who have special educational needs have been maintained. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory with some innovations that are good, such as the increased use of computerised information, especially for the register of pupils and their individual plans. The administrative assistant, who is ensuring that the department is more efficient, is responsible for the majority of the documents produced and their distribution.
85. Governors contribute effectively to the school. They show a sound knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses, especially in financial and pupil welfare matters. They give good advice and support to the headteacher and staff and make a valuable direct contribution to pupils through special events such as governors' 'Praise Assemblies'. The great majority of their statutory responsibilities are met well, but several important curricular statutory failings have not been

addressed, notably ICT provision across the school, design and technology in Years 7 to 9, religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

Staffing

86. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory.
87. The number of full-time teachers has been maintained since the last inspection and new teachers have been appointed to replace those who retired or left the school to take up other posts. Sixty-five of the 89 teachers have more than ten years' teaching experience and, of these, 45 have over 20 years' experience. Loyalty to the school is strong, as over half the teachers have taught only at this school. There is less of a balance between long service and recent training than is usual. Recruitment has been difficult in recent years for teachers of modern languages, music and for short-term posts, but is not a current problem.
88. All teachers are suitably qualified and most teach their main subjects. Standards of work are not adversely affected where non-specialists take a few lessons in subjects other than their main one, except in ICT, where standards are lower than they should be. Classroom assistants give good support to the pupils with special educational needs, but there are too few of them in proportion to the numbers of pupils. Technical, administrative, cleaning and catering staff all contribute to the smooth running of the school.
89. The school works hard to establish a programme of support for teachers and support staff. All members of staff are allowed to attend courses and conferences to help them in their professional development, and newly appointed staff, including those who are newly qualified, are closely helped by more experienced colleagues. As part of their professional development, heads of department have time allocated to observe their colleagues whilst teaching. This helps teachers to review and improve their performance, but the monitoring, evaluation and development after the observations are not yet fully in place.

Accommodation

90. The present accommodation is sufficient for the numbers on roll. The school has recently completed an extensive major rebuilding programme as a result of a fire, and the new part of the school provides modern and spacious areas for teaching and displaying pupils' work, as well as space for subject offices and resource storage. All temporary buildings have been removed since the last inspection and an extensive refurbishment programme is significantly improving accommodation for subjects such as science, art and physical education. In spite of these and further planned improvements, much of the external fabric of the school remains in poor condition. There is a shortage of appropriate rooms to accommodate ICT across the curriculum and the sixth form space is small for the numbers on roll and insufficiently accommodates social and study activities.

Resources

91. There have been improvements in resource capitation and the formulae for funding to departments since the last inspection. Most departments have adequate resources. Art, science, religious education and geography are particularly well resourced. There are insufficient textbooks for English. Overall, resource provision for ICT is unsatisfactory and provision for ICT across the curriculum is detrimentally affected by a low number of relevant machines and networking problems that is preventing the use of new laptops. The suite for the teaching of computer-aided design and manufacture and textiles and food facilities lack appropriate ICT resources.
92. The library has been relocated into the main building since the last inspection and is now more accessible to pupils. It is a pleasant study area and houses a number of computers with Internet access. The learning area is well organised and benefits from the services of a full-time librarian. It is presently insufficiently utilised as a learning resource because the limited space prevents large group usage. After a recent overhaul of books, there are now insufficient research materials for the majority of subjects.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

93. The sixth form is well led and managed. Senior staff have worked hard to establish many good A and AS level courses with the beginnings of a sound vocational education programme. They have set up a caring but challenging context for students to work in and provide very good quality teaching. The welcoming and secure environment and the strong sense of purpose are noticed and valued by students. Against this background, the progress of students is carefully monitored. The leadership is aware of the challenge to themselves set by the issues of widening the curriculum with the inclusion of religious education and a broadening range of vocational subjects, particularly, but not exclusively, in the areas of business studies, drama and the performing arts.
94. The educational and personal support and guidance is very good. There is good rapport between students and their tutors. The head of sixth form makes good use of consultative processes that incorporate students' preferences as well as the views of subject leaders and other staff. The quality and accessibility of information, guidance and advice are very good. Careers guidance is good. Pupils appreciate the quality of the advice and support they receive.
95. Expenditure on the sixth form is currently greater than income because class sizes in Year 13 have declined temporarily: they are on average much larger in Year 12; in addition the year groups further down the school are larger and likely to lead to further expansion. The number of students who leave before the end of their sixth form course is small, and the reasons for leaving are positive ones, such as taking up employment or specialised education elsewhere. The school is rigorous and imaginative in pursuing cost efficiencies and alternative forms of organisation. For example, it uses consortium arrangements for joint teaching of some student classes with a neighbouring school and college of further education. To achieve its own objective of meeting the needs and aspirations of its students the school needs to conduct a rigorous overhaul of its sixth form curriculum. The school has this firmly in its development plan and has prepared the ground well for imminent change.

Resources

96. The resource levels for individual courses in the sixth form are satisfactory, but the facilities for independent study and social interaction are not. Student numbers are already such that social areas, study booths and library facilities are too small with too little access to computers and reference books. The sixth form is currently expanding, thus intensifying this problem.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

97. In order to sustain the current phase of marked improvement, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) extend monitoring of teaching and of the leadership and management of departments to ensure greater consistency of practice and quality in teaching and a clearer view of the roles and responsibilities of heads of department; in particular they should take all necessary steps to achieve sound leadership and management of ICT, design and technology, history and business studies and music. (see paragraphs: 79, 80, 81, 148, 162, 172, 194, 238)
 - (2) raise standards of attainment in ICT and aspects of design and technology, art, history music, business studies and Spanish. (see paragraphs: 5, 6, 7, 136, 143, 144, 145, 157, 158, 166, 167, 168)
 - (3) pursue additional measures to promote high attendance, especially in Year 11, so that the adverse impact of absences on pupils' standards is minimised and further improvement ensured in GCSE pass rate in the D to G range.(see paragraphs: 2, 7,15)

- (4) ensure that additional ICT resources are made accessible and further staff training provided so that the full ICT programme of study is successfully taught and ICT skills are reinforced by all subjects.(see paragraphs: 88, 91, 169)
- (5) restructure curricular provision to ensure that statutory requirements are met in ICT and in design and technology in Years 7 to 9. (see paragraphs: 148, 165)

Minor Issues

(6) The school should also seek to improve:

- the consistency with and which homework is set in Years 7 to 9 by use of an agreed weekly timetable; (see paragraph: 25)
- the ineffective use of time during morning registration and afternoon break; (see paragraphs: 46, 61, 63)
- the relative underperformance by girls in Years 7 to 11; (see paragraph: 7)
- the poor decorative order of much of the outside of the school; (see paragraph: 90)
- the quality of numeracy teaching across the school; (see paragraph: 123)
- the adequacy of library accommodation. (see paragraph: 92)

Sixth form

- (1) Raise the standards in examination results to at least national average in design technology, Spanish, business studies and history. (see paragraphs: 9, 235, 245)
- (2) Take all necessary steps to raise the quality of management in history and business studies. (see paragraph: 9)
- (3) Ensure students have adequate accommodation and facilities for private and independent study. (See paragraph: 90)
- (4) Extend the provision of vocational courses and provision in under-represented curricular areas such as drama and the performing arts. (see paragraphs: 49, 50)
- (5) Ensure the curriculum fully meets statutory requirements in religious education. (see paragraph: 50)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 –11	130
	Sixth form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	9	45	42	29	5	0	0
Percentage	7	35	33	22	4	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	20	28	5	0	0	0
Percentage	3.5	35.7	52	9	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number observed in either the main school or the sixth form is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for [enter Years [] – [] and/or the sixth form here] as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100 in both, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1217	161
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	151	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	194	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	45
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.6
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	132	96	228

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	80	80	81
	Girls	63	54	54
	Total	143	134	135
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (59)	59 (55)	59 (52)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (23)	34 (34)	28 (24)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	78	82
	Girls	67	51	62
	Total	140	129	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (69)	57 (64)	63 (56)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (30)	31 (26)	41 (29)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	71	94	165

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	31	56	65
	Girls	45	77	87
	Total	76	133	152
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46.3 (37.4)	81.1 (83.5)	92.7 (88)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35.2
	National	38.4

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	100
	National	N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	49	38	87

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	15.3	14.6	15.4	5.7	2.8	4.4
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/a
	National	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	94	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y 7- Y 13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	86
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

Education support staff: Y 7 – Y 13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	248

Deployment of teachers: Y 7 – Y 13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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Average teaching group size: Y 7 – Y 13

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	22.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	3,765,266
Total expenditure	3,677,309
Expenditure per pupil	2,669
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	87,957

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1378
Number of questionnaires returned	572

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	54	7	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	48	5	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	52	7	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	52	13	2	7
The teaching is good.	29	59	2	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	46	17	3	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	40	7	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	19	53	17	4	6
The school is well led and managed.	36	50	4	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	52	6	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	44	6	2	10

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good** and in the process of improving still further.

Strengths

- Standards are good compared to schools with a similar intake.
- Pupils achieve well across Years 7 to 9.
- Gifted and talented pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good with many very good qualities. Teachers know their subject and lessons are stimulating and well managed.
- Pupils respond with interest and behaviour in lessons is good.
- Results in English literature GCSE are very good. There are plans to extend the small numbers entered for this examination.
- Present management is very good, with sensible ideas for the development of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work should be developed further.
- Too few pupils are entered for GCSE English.
- Homework is not rigorously enough set and monitored from Year 7, so that pupils develop a more conscientious attitude towards it by Years 10 and 11.
- The department is under-resourced. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to study their texts at home or to extend their reading experiences. The small library provides insufficient extra resources.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning.

98. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000, results were average. Although girls did better than boys, this was by less than is found nationally. Compared with similar schools, results were good. They were similar to results in mathematics and above those in science. They have remained similar for the last three years and have improved in 2001.
99. Standards in the work of pupils at the end of Year 9 are average. High-attaining pupils, of whom many are boys, produce accurate, perceptive analysis, for example of 'Dead Poets Society', and develop their ideas constructively in group work. Middle-attaining pupils show good understanding of their reading. They understand implicit as well as literal meaning when studying the stories of Roald Dahl. Their written work is neatly and accurately presented. Lower-attaining pupils understand plot and character, but need help in paragraphing their writing, and their spelling is poor. Overall, standards in reading, speaking and listening are slightly higher than in writing. The department is looking at ways to improve pupils' writing.
100. Considering their below average attainment on entry to the school, pupils as a whole achieve well between Years 7 and 9. They enjoy their English and develop rapidly, both technically and creatively. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support by the teachers in lessons and join in keenly, also making good progress. There is insufficient extra support provided, but when it is there, it is effective. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress. There are lots of opportunities to take the lead in discussion and most tasks are open-ended, giving them opportunities to explore topics in detail and depth, which they do.
101. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were average compared to schools nationally. Compared to similar schools and pupils' previous performance, results were good. English literature results have been good for several years, but the department enters fewer than half the cohort for this examination. There are plans to enter more pupils in the future. In English language, results were average at A* to C and all the pupils entered gained A* to G. However, far too many, over 10 per cent of pupils, did not take the examination, usually because of absence. Girls outperform boys, but, again, by less than is found nationally. Compared with performance in other subjects in the school, standards in English are average. Results in 2001 were similar, but just a little lower.

102. Standards in the work of Year 11 pupils observed during the inspection are average. Those in reading, speaking and listening are slightly better than those in writing, apart from amongst the high-attaining pupils, where standards are very good in all areas of their work. Such pupils make perceptive responses to poetry, for example of Carol Ann Duffy, and use detail very well to support their ideas. They discuss in small groups with clarity and focus. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress, developing complex ideas in oral and in written work. Middle-attaining pupils are beginning to analyse character in their reading, but are more at ease recounting narrative. They are reticent in their group work and have trouble extending their ideas sufficiently. Lower-attaining pupils respond to plot and character at a simple level. For example, they can select detail confidently from the film version of 'The Speckled Band', but have difficulty in reading the text fluently. Written work is short, using a basic vocabulary and inaccurate spelling. There are large gaps in coursework folders, and frequent absences.
103. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 for pupils as a whole is satisfactory. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well, both boys and girls, but absence and incomplete work hinders the progress of many lower attainers. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Work and teaching methods are carefully matched to their needs, but, again, absence hinders progress.
104. Standards of teaching and learning are good. There is much that is very good and very little below good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use a variety of methods to stimulate and interest pupils. For example, a Year 8 class thoroughly enjoyed their lesson and learnt a lot about how evacuees might have felt during the war whilst studying 'Goodnight Mister Tom' through drama. Group work is effectively used in most lessons and pupils are encouraged to form their own views. Pupils focus well on their tasks and effectively develop their knowledge through discussion. Teachers have high expectations, both of work and behaviour, and pupils are clear about when to discuss and when to concentrate on silent, independent work. Though homework is regularly set and marked, there needs to be more rigorous enforcement from an early age to ensure that older pupils accept the necessity of producing work at home as well as in class. This is made more difficult because of the unsatisfactory nature of resources in the department. Pupils sometimes have to share texts in class and do not always have the opportunity to take their books home. The small size of the library adds to the difficulty of ensuring that pupils read extensively. The school is planning to extend the library in the near future. ICT is used well to develop pupils' work.
105. Relationships within the classroom are very good and pupils learn at a good pace. On the few occasions where learning is less effective, either the pace of the lesson is too slow and pupils are not pushed on in their learning sufficiently, or class management is lax and pupils take the opportunity to misbehave. At present there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to raise all aspects of teaching to the very high standards that exist in the department. The lack of common schemes of work means that not all pupils have the same opportunity of experiences, for example of drama.
106. Leadership and management of the department are good. Present management is very good and has clear ideas about how the department can improve standards even further. Assessment has already been developed and pupils now have a clear idea of their strengths and weaknesses and what their targets are. Schemes of work are beginning to be rewritten in a more cohesive style, so that pupils have equality of opportunity, and there is a greater degree of progression from one year to the next.
107. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment have improved, especially in speaking, and teaching is better. The department is now housed in much improved accommodation, but resources for learning are still low.

Literacy

108. Standards of literacy are average. The school is making good progress in ensuring that the development of literacy plays a part in the teaching of all subjects. A literacy co-ordinator has been appointed and successful training has taken place. There is a clear structure for

development in the future and an audit has been held to analyse what is in place and what needs to be extended. A useful monthly bulletin introduces new ideas.

109. Pupils' knowledge of technical terms is good. Key words are displayed around the school and new words carefully introduced. In mathematics, for example, teachers show good practice in reinforcing words by writing them on the board. Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop their thoughts through speaking, and much good group work was observed during the inspection, in, for example, religious education. In physical education, drama was used effectively to enhance pupils' understanding of how sport developed. Pupils are encouraged to read in a few subject areas, but this area is underdeveloped.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the provision for pupils in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection.
- The teachers are united in seeking better standards.
- The pupils behave well.
- Standards are improving.

Areas for improvement

- Girls' results lag behind those of boys.
- There is inadequate use of ICT as a teaching tool.

110. Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in the year 2000 were affected by staffing arrangements. Non-specialist teachers were deployed to teach mathematics because of financial constraints in previous years. Results were, therefore, below the national average, and below those obtained by pupils from similar schools. They were also below those obtained in both English and science. Over the years between 1998 and 2000, results were below national averages and improved at a slower rate. Results for 2001 show improvement over 2000 figures, both for pupils achieving National Curriculum level 5 or better and for those achieving level 6 or more. These results are above the school's targets for this year and are also higher than the average of those achieved in similar schools. Substantially fewer girls than boys, however, obtained a level 5 or more.
111. Up to the age of 14, pupils' mathematical skills show good improvement. Attainment is below that nationally when pupils join the school at the age of 11 and rises to become broadly in line at the end of the Year 9. The work of higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 showed that there are several capable of obtaining grades 7 or 8 in the coming National Curriculum examinations. They can divide one number to two or more decimal places by another, and work with significant figures is secure. They produce good work on circumference and area of a circle. They understand how to find the perimeter of compound shapes formed from circles and rectangles including overlapping/intersecting parts of circles and rectangles with circles taken out. Middle attainers are working at the equivalent of level 5 or better. These, too, show reasonable understanding of how to find the perimeter of compound shapes incorporating circles and parts of circles. They can find the internal angles of irregular convex polygons and draw a line of best fit on a scattergraph. Lower-attaining pupils can use a number of different methods to multiply two-digit numbers together. They are reasonably secure with the symbols $<$ and $>$ and what they mean. They can multiply decimals by 10, 100, and 1,000. Numeracy standards are in line compared with national levels.
112. GCSE results for 2000 were well above those found nationally for A* to C grades, and in line for the average point score, showing above average improvement for the pupils from their results in national tests two years earlier. Figures for grades A* to G are below the national norm, reflecting patterns of pupil absence and weaker teaching arising from the arrangements referred to above. 2001 results are less good for grades A* to C, but still better than the school had predicted.

Boys' results are improving over time whilst girls' scores diminish. This is a matter of concern for the department, which has considered but not yet implemented strategies to counter this trend.

113. GCSE statistics results in 2001 are outstanding. No one scored less than a grade C and over half obtained the highest grade of A*. Two pupils' marks were amongst those of the top five in the country. Since the classes for statistics are provided for volunteers and occur after school, this represents a stunning achievement.
114. The standard of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11, as seen during the inspection, is broadly in line with that attained nationally. Just under a half show the capacity to obtain grade C or better at GCSE. Several high attainers are on course for the highest grades A*, A or B at GCSE. These pupils produce very good work on basic vector algebra. They can interpret graphs showing quadratic, cubic, and reciprocal functions and solve quadratic equations by graphical methods. Tests done on the equation of a straight line show good understanding. Most show a grasp of coordinates in three dimensions. Middle attainers can recognise similar and congruent triangles and use their properties to solve straightforward examples. Geometric constructions are accurate and neatly drawn. They understand how to find the volume and surface area of a regular prism, but do not always give the answer using the correct units. Lower-attaining pupils can find the area and perimeter of shapes constructed from rectangles and triangles, but are less secure when dealing with the area and circumference of a circle. They can find the mean of a given set of numbers and recognise the range of simple data, although they are not totally confident when handling directed numbers and decimal fractions within this context.
115. Pupils' achievement is good from Year 7 to Year 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Their overall achievement from entering to leaving compulsory schooling is good. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. The progress of pupils in the top sets in Years 10 and 11 is good, but that of those in the lower sets is often adversely affected by poor attendance. Pupils' work in all years reflects similar standards to those demonstrated in the national tests. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout, where attendance is satisfactory, in line with their peers. Good classroom support by assistants, where it is available, is a feature in this respect. Gifted pupils are well catered for by setting arrangements and by the use of additional teaching materials. This is particularly the case for the two students studying for AS level mechanics in Year 11: they are working from very thorough and well-written notes prepared by an experienced and talented teacher, receive substantial extra advice and support both in and out of class, enjoy the work and are making excellent progress.
116. Teaching is good in all of Years 7 to 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. In many lessons, the teachers make good use of their knowledge and understanding of mathematics to challenge and enhance the pupils' understanding. Marking of pupils' work is, in general, thorough. The outcomes from marking are effectively used to inform the lesson planning. Teaching aids such as overhead projectors are well used. In the best lessons, the teachers set high standards, and challenge the pupils to find answers for themselves. Lessons where the teaching was no better than satisfactory occurred largely with average and lower-attaining pupils. These were insufficiently involved in their learning and progress and so did not gain a sufficiently clear grasp of the concepts and principles underlying the mathematics they were learning. In these lessons, there was too little time spent on discussion and reflection so that ideas that seem to have been grasped are not retained.
117. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. In all of the lessons seen, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work were satisfactory or better. In the vast majority of cases, pupils concentrated hard while listening, tried hard at written and graphical work, and their behaviour was good. Even when teaching was less than good most pupils continued to do their best. Attendance is a problem in lower-attaining sets in Years 10 and 11 and affects standards.
118. Provision for the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. There is adequate planning for computer usage in the schemes of work, but in practice there is very little use of computers to assist learning in mathematics. This is because access to the school's central computer network is very limited. The situation is exacerbated because those computers held in the mathematics area are, for the most part, defunct.

119. The increasing use of the National Numeracy Strategy is having a positive effect on pupils' learning, particularly in lower years in the school. Pupils in middle and lower sets, for example, are able to give answers from multiplication tables, such as 7x8 or 9x6, readily. None of the lower-attaining pupils asked in Years 10 and 11 was able to do this. For higher-attaining pupils, numerical skills are good. Middle and lower attainers are less fluent and confident, but there is no evidence of pupils resorting to the use of calculators unnecessarily, as was referred to in the last inspection.
120. Departmental leadership since the last inspection has been satisfactory. During the prolonged period of absence due to illness of the head of department, the two teachers sharing responsibility for departmental organisation and management have provided sound leadership. The team as a whole is supportive and staff work well together, intent on doing their best for the children in their charge. Arrangements for initial teacher training within the department are very effective. Three of the current members of staff completed their teacher training in the school: all speak highly of the support and tuition given to them when they were students on the post graduate certificate of education programme and are very happy to have gained a full-time position in the department.
121. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although staffing difficulties have affected standards, improved staffing now means that standards are improving once more. Teaching is also better than previously. Very little progress has been made, however, with arrangements for monitoring the teachers' work. This is an issue of importance. The work of satisfactory teachers could be improved if their weaker areas were recognised and set as targets for improvement. This was an area of management referred to as a weakness in the last inspection report in 1997. Steps have been taken to ensure that the new arrangements for performance management are in place and operative at whole-school level, but no progress has been made within the department.

Numeracy

122. Numerical skills are broadly in line with national averages. Pupils demonstrate sufficient skills, at a good enough level, in their work across the curriculum to enable them to progress. In design and technology, they can use formulae within the context of putting spreadsheets together. In history, they can draw and interpret graphs and statistics, such as those representing voting in German elections. In English, pupils are able to work out the ages of characters within the context of the time in which they lived.
123. The teaching of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is unsatisfactory. There are individual examples of good work and isolated instances of departments considering that numeracy should be taught in their subject. In science, for example, there is evidence of good teaching of graphs. In physical education, spatial awareness is well demonstrated when looking at the theory of games involving invasion. In art, the pupils are shown how to use measuring techniques to create interlocking shapes and to scale up and down. To date, however, the emphasis for development has been on literacy skills and there is no agreed policy for teaching numeracy across the school. There has been no audit of numerical concepts required in each department, nor any training for teachers other than those in the mathematics department.

SCIENCE

Overall, the provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- Good management of the department.
- Consistently good teaching.
- Very good assessment of pupils' capability.
- Science curriculum.
- Good achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Marking of pupils' day-to-day work.
- Provision of ICT in science lessons.

124. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were average. They were above average when compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Results improved in 2001. Boys perform better than girls. Over the past three years, results have gradually improved. Standards in the work of pupils at the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for these pupils in relationship to the below-average standards when they joined Year 7. In lessons, pupils make good progress as a result of consistently good teaching. At the end of Year 9, their knowledge and understanding of biology, chemistry and physics is average for their age. In this age range, there is a focus by teachers on practical and investigative science so that these skills improve steadily across the age range and by the end of Year 9 are average. For example, higher-attaining pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of plant biology. They understand the function of root hairs and how cells specialise for specific purposes. Middle-attaining pupils are able to carry out simple experiments safely, such as burning magnesium metal, and write word equations describing the reaction. Lower-attaining pupils are able to distinguish between series and parallel circuits. They used their problem-solving skills well in an exercise deciding why circuits would not work.
125. At the end of Year 11, pupils can take a variety of GCSE examinations. In 2000, pupils were entered for GCSE double or single award science. In previous years and in 20001, pupils were entered for GCSE double, single award or the three GCSE separate sciences (biology, chemistry and physics). Therefore, results from year-to-year are not directly comparable. In 2000, results in double award science were well above average. Results in single award were above average in terms of A* to G grades. In 2001, results for the separate sciences were high in terms of A* to C and A*/A grades. Over the last three years, results in GCSE examinations have improved. In 2000, boys performed better than girls. Pupils tend to perform better in their science examinations than in their other subjects. Standards in the work of Year 11 pupils observed during the inspection were above average. This represents good achievement in relation to their starting point at the end of Year 9. Pupils make good progress in lessons because of teaching that is at least good. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of theories and concepts in biology, chemistry and physics are above average for their age. Again, scientific enquiry skills improve across this age range due to good teaching. For example, higher-attaining pupils were observed to have a good understanding of the concept of elasticity in materials. They were able to test a spring to see if it obeyed Hooke's Law, and were developing their numeracy skills well in this lesson by graphically analysing their results. Middle-attaining pupils have a good understanding of electrostatics. They can explain electrostatics in terms of electron loss and gain. Lower-attaining pupils know how to test a solution for acidity. They are improving their understanding of the colour changes seen when solutions are tested with universal indicator.
126. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them as the result of work that is well matched to their needs and effective support in the laboratory. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress as a result of a curriculum that is effectively adapted to suit their needs.
127. Pupils display attitudes to learning that are usually good. They concentrate well in class and work at a good pace. They collaborate well in groups when doing practical work, and this helps their learning. They are usually respectful to their teachers, are mature and well behaved. Good working relationships between teachers and pupils exist and these improve pupils' learning.

128. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding. Scientific theories and ideas are clearly explained and this helps the pupils to learn well. Teachers have high expectations in terms of behaviour and achievement. For example, a lower-attaining Year 10 class were encouraged to develop their practical skills making metallic salts by teaching that clearly laid out the high standards of work and behaviour expected. As a result, they made very good progress. Lessons are well planned, although learning objectives are not always explicitly shared with pupils, which would improve their progress. Although pupils' day-to-day work is marked regularly, it does not give them a good idea of the standards they are reaching by, for example, including the National Curriculum level they are working at. In one lesson, control and discipline of pupils doing practical work was unsatisfactory and this led to the pupils making unsatisfactory progress. However, teaching is usually good or better and well directed to the needs of the pupils.
129. The department makes a good contribution to literacy. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud from science texts to improve their fluency and comprehension. Numeracy skills are well taught. Pupils are taught to manipulate scientific formula from first principles. Data-handling and graphical work are well taught and are an essential feature of the pupils' practical and investigative work. The teaching of ICT in science is satisfactory, although more use could be made of computers in lessons.
130. Management of the subject is good overall with some very good features. The department functions well on a day-to-day basis due in part to the hard work of the team of laboratory technicians.
131. There are very good procedures in place for the assessment of pupils' capabilities and tracking their performance. The science curriculum is effective and caters well for pupils of all capabilities. There is good teamwork within the department. Teachers are committed to the education of their pupils and work hard to raise pupils' attainment. However, there is no formal monitoring of teaching and learning to share good practice and improve the quality of teaching.
132. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good improvement. Standards are improving across all age ranges, the provision of homework is better and teaching has improved. The delivery of the science curriculum has also improved due to better schemes of work. The provision of ICT in the science curriculum is improving.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

Strengths

- The teachers' subject knowledge is very good, which ensures that pupils gain very well in acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers expect pupils to behave and do their best at all times, which leads to very high levels of interest, concentration and independence.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are very good and contribute very successfully to their personal development.
- Art makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The amount and type of teacher-directed sketchbook work, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 need to be made more aware of their National Curriculum targets.
- Teachers need to share good classroom practice.
- There are insufficient computers and programs to help in the teaching of ICT.

133. Results in teachers' assessments in art at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show that girls are attaining higher standards than are boys, and that the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 and above is slightly lower than the national average. Results have been constant for the last two years.

134. Standards in the work of pupils at the end of Year 9 observed during the inspection were average. Pupils draw better when they record what they see, rather than what they imagine. Portraiture is good. Pupils realise the value of making detailed drawings of, for example, the eye or mouth before creating a full face. They understand the divisions of the face and the higher-attaining pupils can add expression. Figure drawing is less successful as many pupils lack understanding of body proportions. Most pupils have a good eye for colour mixing and matching and successfully handle paint, especially watercolours. A set of 'in the swimming pool' pictures in the style of David Hockney show vivid use of primary colours and good attention to light on water. Most pupils use a good variety of tools and materials in creating art work in three dimensions. Some pupils, for example, are making a card triptych to enclose self-portraits and pictures about themselves. The higher-attaining pupils have devised some very complicated mechanisms of opening and closing and are concerned with getting clean edges before embellishing the outer casings. Many pupils have built up a good knowledge of real artists and recognise many famous works. They are used to searching the Internet for information. Pupils are generally unsure of the artists' lives and times, but appreciate the quality in their works. In work seen, girls are more careful when working than are boys and the quality of their work is consequently better. Sketchbook work is below average as too many pupils record only what they like and there is insufficient teacher-directed task- work to build up their skills.
135. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 for pupils as a whole is good, as most of them enter school with limited skills in drawing, painting and printing and their knowledge of the styles and work of real artists is weak. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in practical skills, but less on art theory and about art styles. Teachers and assistants help these pupils in class and sometimes the work they produce is surprisingly good. Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress as they have ample opportunities to extend their studies, and the modules of work allow scope for personal expression and refinement.
136. Results in the 2000 GCSE examinations for grades A* to C were just below average for girls but well below average for boys, who depressed the overall figures. All pupils gained at least a grade G, which is better than the national average. In 2001, boys performed better than girls, the results at A* to C showed an overall 10 per cent improvement and all pupils gained at least a G grade.
137. Standards in the work of Year 11 pupils observed during the inspection were average, reflecting the upward trend. Pupils in Year 11 mostly draw well and are gaining skills in imaginative work and on abstraction. They research sensibly and make samples before deciding what to use on final pieces. Painting is good. Some pupils gain interesting effects by varying the thickness of the paint and others add more materials to create unusual surfaces on which to paint. Most pupils select and analyse the works of real artists and emulate their styles, which also improves the quality of their response. For example, sets of Hockney-inspired colour-changing portraits show good understanding of the artists' work and skill in manipulation. Textile work, printing, ceramics and card sculpture are strong as pupils create individual pieces, often on a large scale. The 'cardboard people', created after artists' workshop sessions, helped pupils with proportion and scale and working in the round. A few pupils take photographs and some of the higher-attaining pupils attempted photomontage. Some who have computers at home use ICT effectively for research and writing about their work. Sketchbook work is variable. The higher-attaining pupils produce good quality sketchbooks, but overall, the quality, variety and amount of work completed is below average.
138. Achievement across Years 10 to 11 for pupils as a whole is satisfactory. In the first three years, pupils learn the main skills in handling drawing and painting materials, and in Years 10 and 11 they are expected to use them on their own projects. Many pupils who choose art have flair and imagination and make good progress, especially in composition, but others, often boys, who hoped that the subject would be easy, cannot always keep up to the amount of practical work and make less progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in skills, but are the ones who are likely to produce less work overall. Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress as they are encouraged to do extra research and consider and review their work more often.
139. Teaching is good and leads to good learning across Years 7 to 11. In the eleven lessons seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory and the majority

were good or very good. Teaching is best in the upper school. The art teachers are enthusiastic, good artists and inspire the pupils. Planning is good: teachers plan interesting topics, they demonstrate effectively to show techniques and ensure that there is enough time for practical work. Modules of work are suitably worded so that pupils can answer them in their own ways, which leads to a very good degree of independence. Teachers pay very good attention to pupils' cultural development as they refer to the works of real artists from all continents, which opens pupils' eyes to other religions and cultures. In formal sessions, teachers ensure that literacy, and to a lesser extent numeracy, are suitably included as they use correct technical language and encourage constructive criticism, as well as checking proportion and measurement. The department makes a good contribution to ICT, mainly through research, but computer-generated art is underdeveloped. Relationships between adults and pupils are also very good and the few pupils who need checking are dealt with firmly and fairly. Marking is good. Teachers write clear comments on all pieces of work so that pupils know about the quality of their work and the best also include comments on how to improve. Pupils in Years 7 to 9, however, are not sure about how their work reflects targets and National Curriculum grades, but pupils in Years 10 and 11 are all given clear information about expected GCSE grades.

140. Leadership is good. The head of department is seen as a good leader and is well respected by colleagues and pupils. Two new teachers have been appointed since the last inspection, and subject specialists now teach all pupils. This has helped to raise standards and the profile of art throughout the school. All teachers are seen teaching by the head of the department, but need to be observed more regularly so that good classroom practice is shared.
141. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are now average. Pupils all have sketchbooks and many use them for the newly instigated sketchbook challenge. Standards are rising in Years 10 and 11, with GCSE results now nearing the national average. Painting has improved, helped by the introduction of gallery and exhibition visits and the artists in residence scheme. The latter, and the links with the local college, have been particularly beneficial for the gifted and talented pupils. Ceramics and textiles are now very strong. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are better, as many pupils who were interviewed say that art is one of their favourite subjects and most of them come to the art rooms prepared to work. Accommodation has been greatly improved as all four art rooms are now in one separate block and communication and access to resources, well cared for by the technician, are readily available. There is a new scheme of work and the departmental documents and assessment procedures, criticised in the last report, are now good. ICT remains an area for development, but, as yet, the department does not have enough modern computers or programs to teach all the required aspects of the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Innovative teaching using design software, electronics and computer controlled machines.
- Pupil's use of ICT and their making of products.

Areas for Improvement

- Unsatisfactory management of the department.
- Unsatisfactory achievement of boys across Years 7 to 11, and girls across Years 7 to 9.
- Provision of statutory design and technology courses across Years 7 to 9.
- Provision of balanced courses offering equal opportunities and progression across Years 7 to 9.
- Accurate assessment of pupils' work throughout Years 7 to 9.

142. Standards in design and technology are similar to those reported in the last inspection. Management of assessment and matching tasks to pupils' needs have not improved across Years 7 to 9. There remains an imbalance between teachers' specialisms and the needs of the department.

143. Teacher assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 showed standards to be below national averages over the last two years, with girls gaining higher levels than boys. However, these are judged to be inaccurate and the standard of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 observed during inspection comes close to national averages, although girls still outperform boys. Strengths include work in designing in plastic, using computer-controlled machinery. In food technology, pupils in Year 7 can skilfully prepare products and some successfully change recipes. In the making of products, ICT is used well. In textiles, pupils make cushions in Year 8, adding attractive decorations. In project work, writing specifications and evaluations do not always include thorough testing of the product in use, and few write about changes made during making. Research in a graphics lesson, for a training shoe, does not show clear decision-making. Work on a child's toy shows good making skills, but lacks flair or a wide brief. Gifted and talented pupils show good understanding of the subject: in Year 8, for example, a pupil could clearly explain the operation of a transistor in a moisture detector. Pupils with special educational needs show appropriate standards, as in a lesson where pupils used computers to design a storage box for a microchip,
144. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory in lessons, but lacks sufficient consistency over longer periods because of inadequate teaching provision and planning of courses. Overall, it is unsatisfactory. The achievement of pupils with special education needs is satisfactory, their progress with project work benefiting from help from sensitive teacher intervention.
145. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 for girls were above national averages, but below for boys. The 2001 results do not reflect this trend, with girls' results dropping when compared to boys'. Standards of work of Year 11 pupils observed during the inspection were above average in the small sample of work seen in food technology and textiles, average in resistant materials and electronics and below in graphic products. Girls' work remains of a higher standard than boys'. In electronics, boys can competently design and modify circuits using computers, then build and test, drawing on good knowledge of digital circuits. In graphics, some pupils find it difficult to keep projects on schedule, and use the Internet for trivial searches. In other areas, such as food, textiles and resistant materials, pupils are able to make products with precision and measure, cut or form materials with accuracy.
146. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 for pupils as a whole is satisfactory, except for boys, whose work in graphics shows underachievement. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is appropriate: in resistant materials, careful guidance for project choice helped most to succeed in completing work. During the inspection, girls seen in lessons showed satisfactory achievement. Gifted and talented pupils also had opportunities to show good progress and were encouraged to extend the range of project work in most cases.
147. Teaching is good across Years 7 to 11, with some very good and excellent lessons. Specialist teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and show confident management of pupils in workshops, food and textile rooms. Most individual projects are planned well, allowing progression for pupils of different abilities. In Year 7, some pupils can learn to model electronic circuits and use professional methods to build moisture detectors. In Year 9, outstanding teaching allows pupils to design toy insects using software and then manufacture these using computer-controlled machines. Some lesson planning limits pupils' progress through the levels of the National Curriculum, as in Year 9 graphics and Year 8 textiles. Homework, when set, complements the work completed in lessons, but does not cater for pupils of differing levels of attainment. Learning in lessons across Year 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Teachers are able to use time well, and lessons have good pace, although pupils' self-knowledge is superficial; they have little understanding of quality factors in their project work. Learning in lessons across Years 10 and 11 is mixed, being satisfactory for girls, but unsatisfactory for boys because of a lack of commitment from a significant minority. Teachers' targets to manage projects and demand quality are not clear to some pupils.
148. Overall, management of the subject since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Departmental documentation does not include detailed quality statements for individual projects. Moderation of project work has not led to accurate reports to pupils of levels. The full programme of the National Curriculum is not covered due to lack of planning, deployment and numbers of

qualified staff. Time for design and technology in Years 7 to 11 is low at 8 per cent. Control systems and structures are not taught, although equipment is in school. As a result, different classes cover different parts of the course: most miss some important areas from the scheme that covers resistant materials, electronics, food, textiles and graphics as well as computer design. Rigorous monitoring of lessons by the head of department has not started. Project funding is low compared with national averages and although there is efficient use of old computers, new national technology initiatives are being held back. Some textiles and food rooms are too small and lack ventilation. Technical support is good in workshops, but limited in food and textiles.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- GCSE results in 2001 were very high.
- Teaching is good in all years.
- Teachers develop good relationships and this helps to maintain good behaviour and a constructive attitude in the majority of pupils.
- The early introduction of enquiry work helps pupils to develop their decision-making skills.

Areas for improvement

- The difference in the results between boys and girls.
- The fulfilment of the plans to use ICT to enhance learning, especially in the areas of data-logging and modelling.
- Clearer short-term targets that help pupils to learn rather than providing them with general long-term aims.

149. Results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were average in 2001. This is similar to results over the last few years. The results of girls are higher than those of boys and the difference is similar to the national pattern. Standards of work of pupils at the end of Year 9 observed during the inspection were average. The majority of pupils have a good sense of place and are able to discuss the characteristics of their own area. Many are familiar with Ordnance Survey maps and can use them to obtain information about local settlements. Year 7 pupils have a good understanding of the features of Clumber Park that attract visitors. Year 9 pupils know that there is a link between climate and vegetation in the tropical rainforests. They can carry out investigations and use a range of information to reach conclusions. The high-attaining pupils have a good insight into geographical issues, whilst the low-attaining pupils are more confident with simple descriptions. Many of the lower-attaining pupils are not as familiar with atlases as they should be and have not yet got appropriate strategies for using them effectively.
150. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 for pupils as a whole is good. The higher-attaining pupils make good progress, but need to be further challenged so that more achieve the higher levels. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers are conscious of their individual needs and often adapt material for them. There are, however, too few in-class support assistants to ensure that pupils make better progress.
151. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were well above average. All pupils achieved a grade and 74 per cent achieved grades A* to C. In addition, 24 per cent achieved grades A* /A. Girls, in particular, achieved very good results. The difference between girls and boys was greater than the national pattern. These are very good results. In previous years, whilst GCSE results have been close to the national average, grades in geography have not been as high as in other departments. Ten pupils also took the Certificate of Achievement, and most achieved grades 1 or 2.
152. Standards in the work of Year 11 pupils observed during the inspection were above average. The majority of pupils recognise the landforms associated with coastal locations. Higher-attaining pupils are able to explain the processes of erosion and deposition that create these landforms.

They have a good sense of place through their studies of the Holderness coast. Their course work is of a high standard because of the planning that introduces decision-making work earlier in the school. All pupils carry out simple enquiries, using a good variety of techniques to collect data and present their results. Whilst these investigations are often supported by teachers, higher attainers produce excellent reports using a wide range of graphical techniques. They reach appropriate conclusions and evaluate their work sensibly. Lower-attaining pupils often produce well-presented analyses using ICT, but their conclusions are limited, simplistic and often descriptive.

153. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is good. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress, achieving high grades. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a variety of geographical experiences and standards slightly below average. At the end of Year 11, their achievements are good and all achieve a GCSE grade.
154. Teaching is good. In many of the lessons observed, teaching was very good. The teachers are all good geographers and have very good, up-to-date knowledge of their subject that helps them to convey interest and to motivate pupils. A Year 9 lesson on the rainforests was a model of how to integrate listening, speaking, reading and social skills. Pupils maintained their concentration throughout and there was an excellent learning environment. In almost all lessons, there are clear objectives and pupils know what is expected of them. The high expectations of staff help pupils to learn and this is evident in work with Year 11 pupils, where less confident pupils are encouraged and supported. All teachers are keen to extend the skills of pupils and develop their literacy skills through careful planning. Good use is made of homework to help pupils practise their skills. The use of separate exercise books is good. There is regular marking of work and the use of target setting to extend pupils is good, but not consistently applied across all classes. Some of the targets are too general and do not help pupils to make better progress.
155. Learning is good across all years. In all lessons, pupils extend their geographical knowledge through making extensive notes, drawing sketch maps and graphs. They practise their skills and learn to handle a range of data. All pupils develop their understanding and learn to think geographically, but this skill is particularly evident in the work of higher attainers where they demonstrate a clear, logical, analysis of the geographical factors operating in different situations. In many lessons, teachers make intellectual demands on pupils, but there are a few occasions where this is not high enough and low level exercises are set. There are good opportunities for pupils to become independent learners and this builds up to the GCSE work in Years 10 and 11. In too many lessons, the teacher dominates, which limits the learning of some, who are content to let the teacher do too much of the work. Attitudes and behaviour have a strong influence on learning: pupils are well behaved and polite and the majority have good self-discipline. Their attitude is shown in the neat and well-presented exercise books.
156. The management of the department is good and gives clear educational direction to a hard-working and dedicated team. This is shown in the helpful documentation and sensible systems. The assessment system is good and helps pupils' learning and understanding of the examination requirements. The team approach has helped to achieve good improvements since the last inspection. However, the department does not adequately fulfil the requirement to provide all pupils with ICT skills because of a lack of appropriate equipment. The formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is at a very early stage.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good achievement in Years 7 to 9 from a low attainment level on entry.
- Good teaching that results in good learning. Lessons are well planned and well delivered.
- Good accommodation that enhances opportunities for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in history throughout the school is below that in similar schools nationally and below the levels achieved in other subjects within the school.
- The leadership and management of the department must be more rigorous and determined.
- There is not enough emphasis on the skills that encourage independent learning for all pupils.
- Target more rigorously the gifted and talented pupils.

157. By the end of Year 9, pupils attain standards that are below national norms. Results in teacher assessments are below national expectations and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicates similar standards. However, in many classes observed during the inspection, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. In these lessons, pupils handle historical facts to good effect and they increase their knowledge of types of historical evidence, which they interpret well. For example, Year 9 pupils, in their study of the African peoples of the Americas, effectively use primary and secondary sources to tease out the biographies of black heroines of the anti-slavery movement, such as Harriet Tulman and her work on the escape route, known as the 'underground railroad'. Pupils are encouraged to judge the reliability and validity of such evidence. Nevertheless, pupils' overall attainment across time is affected by their limited grasp of some of the more sophisticated literacy skills and by their lack of retention techniques: as a result, they attain below national expectations.
158. By the end of Year 11, the standards attained by pupils are below national expectations. Results in GCSE, at 44.6 per cent A* to C grades, are below the national levels. However, a pleasing feature is that standards of pupils' work in several lessons seen during inspection are equal to the standards achieved in similar schools nationally. In such lessons, pupils are skilful at linking several facts together to make a comprehensive and cohesive historical picture. For example, Year 11 pupils, in their studies of the United States in the period before the attack at Pearl Harbour, can extrapolate, from their study of speeches made by President Roosevelt between 1937 and 1940, a clearly defined change in the American government's attitudes towards the war even before the events of December 7 1941. Yet pupils lack confidence when dealing with the complexities of analysis and evaluation when confronting them in tests and examinations and this leads to attainment falling below national norms.
159. Pupils' achievement in each year from Year 7 to Year 9 is good. Progress is good, since many pupils enter the school with a very low baseline of skills and knowledge. By the end of this stage of their learning, pupils have a good knowledge of the periods they are studying and they are effectively able to relate causation to effect. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 build on the progress made in the first three years. However, their overall achievement by the end of Year 11 is only satisfactory since it is affected adversely by some pupils' poor attendance and negative attitudes, especially, but not exclusively, in Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. However, the achievement of gifted and talented pupils is not yet maximised because of the lack of a more rigorously focused and targeted provision.
160. Teaching is good overall throughout Years 7 to 11 and pupils learn well as a result. No lesson observed during the inspection was less than satisfactory and some lessons were very good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. In the best lessons, which are well planned and well prepared, a characteristic of history teaching is that the teachers' belief in the value of the subject is reflected in their enthusiasm for it. This has a strong impact on pupils' learning. In such lessons, teachers are particularly good at establishing good relationships and they are adept at drawing out significant points from material which is both challenging and exciting and which encourages pupils to become more involved in their own learning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the use of tools in the new stone age, the teacher used a piece of flint to cut various shapes in order to demonstrate its use as a tool. By getting pupils to analyse the efficiency of the tool, he was able to get them to extrapolate a host of pertinent facts, such as the use of handles made of bone. However, in some lessons, teachers tend to be overly didactic and pupils are not

sufficiently encouraged to become independent learners. The gifted and talented pupils, particularly but not exclusively, underachieve in such circumstances.

161. The response of pupils is good. With the exception of a small but significant group of pupils, mostly of very low ability, pupils generally show good application to their work. They respond diligently, settle quickly and sustain concentration. Their positive behaviour and response, which is often a direct result of good teaching and good classroom management, is an important factor in their increased learning.
162. The management and leadership of the department are unsatisfactory. The head of department has a clear vision for the future of the subject within the school, which is based on achieving higher standards of attainment and increasing the popularity of the subject. However, certain strategic and operational matters need to be addressed with more rigour in order to achieve this vision. These include: the management of changes in teaching methods to those which encourage pupils to become more active participants in their own learning; the more rigorous monitoring of assessment and marking procedures; and an insistence on the strict adherence to best practice in these areas. For example, there are several inconsistencies in such matters as the posting of documents referring to levels and grades in pupils' notebooks. Aspects of assessment such as targeting are in the earliest of stages of development.
163. The teaching rooms have displays of pupils' work which act as an incentive and which create an atmosphere conducive to learning. These walls and the walls of the corridor of the history suite are used effectively to improve pupils' literacy by the addition of key words. There are now clear policies for the use of ICT in the increasing school provision, but as yet, there is insufficient access to, use of and training in the use of ICT to support the subject. This was a matter highlighted in the last report.
164. Since the last report, the department has moved to new accommodation which is of a very high standard and which is very conducive to pupils' learning. However, there has been a general decline in standards of attainment since the last report.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Achievement in information systems courses across Years 10 and 11.
- Quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Use of ICT in design and technology, media studies and geography.

Areas for Improvement

- Management is unsatisfactory.
- Provision of the statutory courses for all pupils in Years 7 to 11.
- Standards of pupils' work by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Quality and quantity of computers, accommodation and staff training.
- Assessment and reporting across Years 7 to 11.

165. Standards in ICT have not improved since the last inspection, except in Years 10 and 11, where the GCSE option has raised standards for some pupils. Most others still do not receive their full statutory entitlement to ICT courses.
166. Teacher assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2000 showed standards to be above national averages, with girls doing better than boys. However, these are judged to be inaccurate. The standards of pupils' work for both boys and girls at the end of Year 9 observed during inspection were below average. This was due in part to inconsistencies in teacher assessments made by subjects, and lack of moderation. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of most areas of the curriculum are not well developed. In design and technology, pupils are able to use computer graphics to design products, and manufacture these using computers to control machinery. In English and geography, some pupils can use ICT to communicate very well.
167. Achievement across Year 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory as a whole. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are not making sufficient progress through lack of teaching provision.
168. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were average overall. For girls they were well above national averages, but they were below average for boys. The 2001 results reflect this trend, which has shown improvement since 1999, but with girls outperforming boys. Standards of work of Year 11 pupils taking the option observed during the inspection matched these results. Pupils are able to use spreadsheet software to solve problems and model. Project work is of a high standard, with many pupils able to follow a schedule, and meet targets consistently.
169. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 for pupils as a whole is unsatisfactory, with no teaching provision for the National Curriculum beyond the option choice. However, in some other subjects, pupils continue to build on their use of ICT. In science, pupils can competently use computer-logging equipment to record data. In geography, many pupils use ICT to improve the presentation of coursework, adding graphs and diagrams.
170. Teaching is satisfactory. In the first three years, teaching is only provided in Year 8, where it is satisfactory. Teachers have a sound knowledge of their subject and show very good management of the large groups. Teachers have support from sixth form students, who provide sound technical assistance. However, some teachers do not show a clear understanding of the pedagogy of the subject and their methods of meeting the needs of pupils of differing abilities are unsatisfactory, especially for gifted and talented pupils and for those with special educational needs. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in the optional information systems classes. Teachers here have a very good knowledge of their subject. Planning is good, and record keeping and design of resources are thorough. Teachers have very good relationships with these classes, readily engaging groups and guiding discussion.
171. Learning across Year 7 to 9 is satisfactory only in Year 8; otherwise it is unsatisfactory. Most pupils do not show gains in knowledge and understanding of ICT in relation to previous learning or using computers at home. Learning is good in English, geography and design and technology.

Classes generally enjoy meeting new topics in ICT, but in Years 10 and 11, some feel they have forgotten many skills through lack of opportunities, except in a minority of subjects.

172. Overall, management of the subject since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory: monitoring has not been effective, and cross-curricular methods, whilst encouraging some very good use of computers to support subjects, have not succeeded in raising standards of ICT skills; and the school does not provide enough lesson time to cover the National Curriculum. There is insufficient hardware, with some classes across Years 7 to 9 having to share one computer between three pupils. There is too little tracking of pupil progress, except in Year 8, whilst assessing of levels is inaccurate. The other subjects of the curriculum are now unable to book computer rooms regularly. Whilst technical support is very good, there are insufficient, fully trained teachers to meet curriculum needs.

MODERN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in this area is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well.
- Teachers manage their pupils very well and their behaviour is very good overall.
- Accommodation is very good and teachers have created a very good language-learning environment.
- Pupils make good progress in French.

Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE Spanish have remained below average for the last three years.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not use the foreign language enough.
- The development of writing in Spanish is not managed effectively enough.
- The monitoring of teaching does not lead to the sharing of the best practice.

173. Standards in tests and examinations are average overall. Over the last three years, GCSE results in both languages rose to a peak in 2000 and then dipped. GCSE point scores in both languages show an upward trend. Results are better in French than in Spanish.
174. Overall, in 2000, the teacher assessments in modern languages at age 14 were in line with the national average. In 2001, they improved to just above the national average. Given the below-average attainment of the pupils on entry to the school, they make good progress and their achievement is mostly good by the age of 14. In 2000, GCSE results in French were above the national average, but they were below in Spanish. In 2001, French results fell slightly to below the national average and in Spanish they remained below. In French, pupils reached the targets set for them and they performed better in French than in most of the other subjects they took. In Spanish, pupils did not reach their targets and performed worse than in their other subjects. The gap between the performance of boys and girls is generally narrower than is the case nationally. However, the relative performance of boys and girls changes from year to year.
175. The standards in lessons and work seen in French and Spanish at the age of 14 are average overall, although better in French than Spanish. Pupils listen carefully to the teacher and to tapes. Because most pupils concentrate well, they understand most of the material that is presented, but many middle and low attainers need considerable support and repetition by the teacher. About two thirds of pupils develop their speaking skills satisfactorily because they have enough practice through chorus work and speaking activities on a regular basis. Other pupils do not develop the confidence and fluency they need because of lack of opportunities to hear the teacher using the foreign languages, and to use it themselves. Pupils develop satisfactory reading skills and have opportunities to use dictionaries sensibly. There is a wide range of attainment in writing by the age of 14. Many higher attainers in French write longer passages and can use the past tense well, but in Spanish, higher attainers are only just beginning to write the more extended and detailed descriptions and accounts expected at this point. Standards of literacy are generally good and pupils take time to present their work carefully and accurately.

However, pupils are not required to correct or redraft their work their work after the initial careful marking by teachers. Opportunities for work in ICT have been delayed because of technical problems. Pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils are generally provided for well. They mostly make good progress because of the good teaching in the smaller groups that are created for them.

176. The standards in lessons in French and Spanish at the age of 16 are average overall. In general, pupils continue to develop their writing skills satisfactorily. Many achieve in line with expectations and a significant proportion of higher achievers achieve above expectations, particularly in French. Higher and middle attainers in Spanish have more difficulty in meeting the demands of the written examination, because on entry into Year 10 they have had less experience of writing at length. The best work of the higher attainers shows flair and imagination and care and attention to grammar. The development of speaking and listening depends, above all, on the amount of input of the foreign language provided by the teacher and on how much practise pupils have regularly. Most pupils of all abilities reach satisfactory standards in speaking and listening. A few higher and some middle and lower attainers achieve well because of very good teaching. A significant number of pupils, especially lower attainers, remain very hesitant in speaking and do not reach the expected standard. Pupils in French achieve well, but in Spanish they achieve only satisfactorily.
177. Although there are some areas requiring improvement, particularly in Spanish, the quality of teaching is good overall and pupils' learning is correspondingly good. Two thirds of the lessons seen were good or better. A small number were excellent, because of the very good pace and very purposeful teaching of all objectives, especially speaking. In one Year 9 Spanish lesson, pupils learnt rapidly new words for souvenirs they could buy on a Spanish holiday. Then to reinforce their learning, they took part very well in games, including being blindfolded and guessing which souvenir they were holding.
178. Strengths in teaching include the very good knowledge teachers have of the languages they teach and the good model accents and intonation they pass on to their pupils. Teachers plan very well and, in most lessons, pupils are able to make progress in nearly all skills. The methods used are very varied, so as to maintain interest and concentration. Especially in the very good and excellent lessons, teachers give pupils lengthy practice in learning and pronouncing new words, and then use the overhead projector to reinforce the new words yet again, but in a colourful and stimulating way. All teachers manage their pupils very well and ensure very good behaviour, so that pupils can make a good effort individually. Teachers work well with the support assistants, when they are available, and ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make as good progress as others in the year. For example, in a lesson for Year 10 lower attainers, the teacher, using French all the time, presented a large compass on an overhead transparency and then used fun games to enable pupils to give directions. The response from pupils, especially the boys, was excellent.
179. Improvement is needed in some areas. A few teachers use English too much and do not give pupils adequate practise in pronunciation. A few miss opportunities to use the overhead projector. The planning for the teaching of writing to raise standards, especially of higher attainers in Spanish from early on in their learning, is not managed well enough.
180. Pupils' behave very well in lessons and most participate well. Their attitudes are good and this factor contributes considerably to their good learning.
181. The department has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. Teaching has improved, especially of the lower attainers. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching and more work is demanded of pupils in all lessons. Accommodation is much improved. As before, teachers provide a good range of trips and exchanges for pupils. Nevertheless, there is still a difference in the standards achieved by pupils in French and Spanish. Access to ICT remains limited, and more monitoring of teaching is required.
182. The department is in transition, under satisfactory new overall management of both languages. Accommodation is very good and teachers have worked hard to create a very good language-learning environment in each classroom. Teachers are well qualified and include two valuable

foreign language assistants. Resources are generally adequate, although the French textbooks are badly in need of replacement. Under the careful financial management of the head of department, this is planned for next year, when the present schemes of work are to be updated. However, the delegation of developmental work to the second layer of management is not always immediately possible, because all of these teachers are part-time. More careful management is needed of the planning for the interesting scheme for pupils' early entry to GCSE, especially in Spanish. The monitoring of teaching has not so far ensured the full sharing of the best practice in the department. The good planned initiatives in ICT have unfortunately been delayed because of technical difficulties.

Classics

183. The quality of provision for classical studies is very good. These findings are based upon a small sample of lessons, observed across the age ranges of all pupils. The department has a number of strengths, and among these are the very good results both for GCSE and for post-16 examinations. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have one lesson each week, and later they can study classics as an optional GCSE subject. In 2001, twelve pupils gained A* or A. In the sixth form, both AS and A level examinations are offered, and in 2001, the three candidates entered for AS level all gained B grades.
184. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The lively, and often humorous, lessons hold pupils' attention and interest very well. Another of the subject's strengths lies in the textbooks and resources produced within the department by two of the teachers. These texts, together with the universally high standard of teaching, enable all pupils to learn very well. They follow very spirited accounts of classical stories, which are written especially for their course of study. The colloquial language used enables pupils not only to understand the stories, but also to identify with them by their turn of phrase. For example, in the story of the Judgement of Paris, when the shepherd was being threatened by Aphrodite, the text says, "Oh crikey,' thought Paris. 'Now I'm definitely in trouble.'" Earlier in the story, when the scene is being set, Paris is discovered 'sitting on a rock.... nervously biting his nails.' By such direct and easily understood terms, pupils delight in following the tales and later answering questions about them, responding both orally and in writing. These resources have been produced over four years and represent a great deal of work by the head of department, while still teaching, planning and marking across a whole key stage, together with all the examination group work. The leadership of the department is very strong, and gives a very clear vision for success. It is very well organised, and development includes a focus on improving the grades of C to D pupils.
185. Classical studies offer a very good cultural experience for pupils, and are a strength of the school.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision for music is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, is good.
- Pupils consistently gain above-average results at GCSE.
- ICT is well used.
- Gifted and talented pupils achieve well in music.
- The department makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment and achievement across Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.
- The quality of teaching across Years 7 to 9 is inconsistent and is unsatisfactory.
- Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and taking appropriate action are not effective.

186. Teachers' assessments of attainment in music for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were broadly average. The attainment of girls is slightly higher than that of boys.
187. Standards in the work of pupils in Year 9 observed during the inspection overall were below average. The difference between current and 2000 classes is directly related to the quality of teaching and to the difficulties in continuity of staffing that the department has encountered over the past eighteen months. Overall, boys and girls attain equally well, although it is possible to discern different strengths and weaknesses. For instance, boys of a wide range of abilities are more prepared to experiment, while girls of lower ability are diffident in offering ideas. Pupils who are gifted or talented attain good standards. Pupils with special educational needs generally attain in line with their capabilities. Standards of attainment have declined since the previous inspection.
188. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 for pupils as a whole is unsatisfactory, as is the achievement of pupils with special educational needs, particularly those with behavioural problems, who have no support in lessons. When given clear guidelines, pupils compose confidently and are prepared to experiment and refine their work. Their listening skills are satisfactory, and many readily recall factual information. They understand staff notation and the layout of the keyboard. However too many are not able to develop their skills and their inherent musicianship because this as a long-term objective is not clear in all lessons. There is no difference in the levels of achievement between boys and girls. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils in music is good.
189. Results in GCSE exams in 2000 were above average. All pupils gained A* to C grades, maintaining the pattern of the previous years, and similar results were obtained in 2001.
190. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is good for all pupils. Most pupils perform at a good standard, and some at a very high standard. Their compositions are well structured and musically convincing, and more able pupils create pieces with some memorable features. Their aural skills are good. Pupils with special educational needs do very well. Because of the high level of empathy which exists within the group and the sensitive encouragement of the teacher, and because of his determination to co-operate despite the difficulties of his condition, one boy played a piano solo accurately and stylishly, and was able to discuss strengths and weaknesses in his composing in order to improve an already convincing piece of music. Pupils' retention and recall of historical knowledge are unsatisfactory.
191. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Across Years 7 to 9, it is unsatisfactory. Although a number of good lessons were observed, there were an almost equal number of unsatisfactory lessons. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher's careful planning, high expectations and very good control transformed the mood of what had been a boisterous group of pupils. They co-operated without question, making good use of their time both in written exercises and in practical work. In this and other successful lessons the teacher's organisation and use of technology ensured no time was lost between activities. Tasks set were broken into short-term targets. As a result, pupils quickly devised a 'hook' for a song, and two more able girls composed words and melody that created their chosen atmosphere of tranquillity most effectively. However, too many lessons depend on teaching factual knowledge at the expense of learning based on practical experience, and pupils are not always shown how to create a musically satisfying effect. For instance, pupils learning to play a keyboard piece were not shown logical fingering technique. Although these pupils were able to relate pitch to staff notation, most were dissatisfied with the unmusical, disjointed effects they produced. In a number of lessons, control was unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, all teaching seen was good and at times very good.
192. Learning is satisfactory or better when teaching is satisfactory or better. Because of the amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9, learning overall is unsatisfactory. Learning in Years 10 and 11 is good.
193. Pupils' attitudes are usually very positive, but they display signs of disaffection when teachers' control or use of time is unsatisfactory. They are tolerant even when teachers' explanations are too long. They co-operate well with each other, work purposefully and are careful with pieces of equipment. When given clear guidelines, they control instrumental sound and try to avoid disturbing each other.

194. Currently, the department has strong leadership. Systematic schemes of work are clearly designed to develop pupils' musical skills and extra challenge is consistently provided for more able pupils, although pupils with special educational needs are not always catered for. It would be helpful to state more clearly the long-term objectives of developing essential skills so that all staff understand to what end particular lessons are to be taught. The assessment of pupils' work has improved since the previous inspection, but there is no obvious link between assessments and National Curriculum levels in music. To be fully effective, the literacy policy needs further development. ICT is effectively used in music throughout the school. Management, for reasons beyond with the control of the head of department, is not satisfactory. Staffing problems have posed great difficulties and supply staff have been required to fill gaps in provision. Efforts to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching have been frustrated by staff absence and by a lack of understanding of the music education process, which has created some resistance to monitoring and evaluation. The accommodation has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is satisfactory, although when several large classes are taught at the same time it becomes over-crowded. Resources are satisfactory, having improved since the previous inspection, but the provision of classroom percussion, almost entirely soprano glockenspiels, requires more variety of pitch and timbre.
195. The department provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, and concerts and other musical events take place regularly. A carol service is given each year, visiting local churches in turn. Recently the school's musicians made a concert tour to The Netherlands. The head of department is well supported by an able group of instrumental teachers. The department makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the provision for physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- GCSE physical education results in 2001.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject and the departmental learning ethos are good.
- Sixth form provision.
- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- Extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in core physical education between the ages of 14 and 16.
- Teaching strategies to improve higher-order knowledge of games and pupils' evaluation of their own performance.
- Curriculum arrangements for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16.

196. Standards in core studies are in line with those expected nationally at the ages of 14 and 16. The 2001 GCSE results show very good improvement when compared to recent trends. A level results in 2000 were well above the national average. Present curriculum arrangements prevent many students from maintaining appropriate levels of progress between the ages of 14 and 16.
197. Standards at the age of 14 are in line with national expectations. A significant number of pupils enter school with unsatisfactory standards. Activities in gymnastics, rugby, netball and football observed during the inspection show pupils linking skills and techniques to improve their performance. However, planning for lessons does not always ensure that the most able pupils are challenged to apply this into appropriate game forms. Standards in the core programme of physical education remain satisfactory at the age of 16. As there is unsatisfactory continuity and challenge in activities from ages 14 to 16, these standards represent underachievement for a number of pupils.
198. The percentage of pupils passing GCSE physical education at grades A* to C levels in 2000 is well below the national average, similar to the trend of previous years. The results in 2001 show

considerable improvement and are close to the expected national average. The latest results still show boys to be significantly weaker than girls in theoretical aspects of their study. Fifty per cent of the girls in this cohort achieved top marks in their theoretical paper, and one girl was in the top ten of results nationally. A high proportion of these results are at the highest grades. These results reflect positively on the recent developments in the department to improve examination study skills.

199. Achievement between the ages of 11 and 14 is good. Pupils show a keen interest and respond positively to the breadth of activities on offer. Their knowledge and understanding of rugby, football, netball and hockey improves as they accurately display precision and fluency in a range of appropriate techniques. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 in core physical education is satisfactory. However, there is significant underachievement across all abilities at this age. Newly introduced activities give little scope for continuity in pupils' learning so they fail to make the progress achieved in other years, especially when judged by higher National Curriculum level criteria. Achievement is greater when pupils are expected to focus clearly on the learning targets given. In Year 9 gymnastics and netball classes, improvement happens as a result of reflection on performance and pupil and teacher evaluations made in comparison to intended learning objectives.
200. Students taking GCSE sport studies are making good progress. The recently extended number of GCSE lessons allows Year 10 pupils additional time to devise criteria to analyse game performances, an improvement on previous groups. Year 11 pupils make very good practical progress in badminton by analysing the roles of individual shots. There are lost opportunities to link theory with practical, as pupils insufficiently record and analyse their evaluations of other performances or suggest ways to improve.
201. The quality of teaching is good overall, with examples of very good and excellent teaching. In all lessons observed, relationships were positive and pupils' very good attitudes to the subject had a significant effect on skill acquisition. Teaching methods are effective. Continuity of play is improved in all games lessons because teachers skilfully give tasks based on accurate assessments of the previous learning in the lesson. Better teaching and learning occurs in netball and gymnastics when methods are used that allow pupils to become involved in feeding back each other's strengths and weaknesses. Learning is maximised because pupils are further motivated to show an interest in commenting about their own and others' work. Lower attainers and those with special education needs make good progress because of relevant and knowledgeable interventions by teachers and because group work involves all pupils. However, teachers' planning does not identify the range of abilities to be taught, and average and high attainers are not always fully extended and challenged with appropriate tasks. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use clear and effective instruction and demonstration when introducing new practices. Unsatisfactory breadth of study in Years 7 to 9 means that full use of this expertise is not presently made. Teaching does not address the techniques needed for the quality of movement and the understanding of advanced tactics at this level. Teachers use key skills and effective literacy strategies satisfactorily to enhance understanding. They identify key vocabulary to describe the prominent learning points of a range of games techniques. Other areas, such as pupil initiative, oral contributions and independent creativity, are restricted in lessons that do not have the necessary structure to enable pupils to plan and evaluate their work.
202. The head of the department provides good leadership. Developmental planning has identified the problem of underperformance in GCSE examinations and the need for a curriculum that embraces the principles of Curriculum 2000. Good assessment criteria have been developed to target progress and strategies to improve examination preparation, raising standards. Pupils' use of ICT enhances their personal studies and teachers are beginning to consider National Curriculum level outcomes to influence their teaching strategies. Management procedures within the department are less developed and result in inefficient procedures for future development. For instance, there is too little consistency across the department in the way staff performance is monitored and assessed. The department has yet to consider the benefits of a teaching and learning policy to ensure consistency of approaches. The present expertise of staff is not shared and further developed through a monitoring and evaluation programme.
203. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Recent strategies have significantly improved examination standards. Statutory requirements for physical education provision in Years 7 to 9 have been restored, but present timetable arrangements still severely restrict the choice of options for these pupils. The department has been successful in producing relevant assessment criteria for pupils at all stages, and schemes of work are in place to ensure continuity and progress in their learning. Present management procedures do not ensure assessments are used at the next stages in learning. The department still maintains a very strong ethos of equal opportunity for all pupils who wish to pursue interests in sport. An excellent range

of extra-curricular activities contributes to the positive learning ethos in the department. These clubs are well attended and offer further learning experiences for many to improve their skills, to play in inter-school competitions and to achieve representative honours.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision for religious education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Results in GCSE examinations are well above the national average, in both A* to C and A* to G grades.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils are learning and using skills such as research, reflection and how to balance moral dilemmas in issues such as euthanasia.
- Display, resources, and their use are of a very high quality and promote very good learning.
- Leadership of the very strong team of teachers is very good.
- Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are consistently very good or excellent, because of teachers' very high expectations.

Area for development

- Better provision of suitable work for lower-attaining pupils. The department has already recognised this and is working to remedy it.

204. The results from the 2001 GCSE examinations are well above the national average and show religious education to be the school's leading subject when an average score is taken. Seventy-two per cent gained A* to C grades, against a national figure of 52.6 per cent. When A* to G grades are analysed, the national figure is 95 per cent and the school's results show that 100 per cent of those entered gained A* to G.
205. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is above the average expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus. This is a result of the very good or excellent teaching, which enables pupils to acquire knowledge and further their understanding very well. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, generally make good progress. However, in a few lessons, tasks for lower-attaining pupils were lacking in challenge and resulted in insufficient opportunity to consolidate their learning. Extension work that is provided for gifted and talented pupils is usually very good and enables them to push on further with their learning. Pupils are taught to research, find and read relevant passages from the Bible and, having reflected, to think of and apply their own ideas. They learn in some detail about several world religions. For example, they not only know that Muslims pray five times each day, but they have also performed the positions of prayer. Teachers use excellent videotapes in order to further pupils' understanding. Year 9 saw an extract about a Muslim from Birmingham, telling them about his feelings when he was on pilgrimage to Makkah.
206. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is also above average. They all make good progress, including those who have special educational needs, and they learn about some of the social dilemmas facing society today, such as abortion and euthanasia. They extend their understanding, having absorbed the foundation of the topic by learning some facts, such as the legal position about euthanasia. They learn to evaluate case studies, as in a Year 10 lesson where pupils used a story about a terminally ill child and the parents' wish to prevent further suffering. They had to balance the law, feelings, reactions, and suffering. Some went on to consider issues about the quality of life, and problems that may arise if euthanasia was legal. Above-average attainment is achieved across the range of pupils, that is, those who are studying for GCSE, and the whole of the age range who are studying the short course.
207. Teaching and learning are very good, with some that is excellent. Teachers plan very well overall, and use methods that enable most pupils to add to their knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, in an excellent Year 7 lesson, although pupils had heard the story of the ten plagues of the Exodus before, they were spellbound by the teacher's version, which had graphic information about each plague. They were told in some detail how flies eat by making a sort of 'porridge' of the food they land on. However, these were not ordinary flies, confided the

teacher, but very large bluebottles, all over people's food, belongings and houses! Resources are used imaginatively and very well, and the department has some excellent films, such as the animated version of the story of Moses, which kept Year 8 silent and enthralled. The Year 9 selection about the Muslim pilgrimage brought this to life and captured the all-pervading atmosphere of the hajj. Teachers maintain very good control and manage lessons very well. As a result, pupils' attitudes and behaviour throughout most of the lessons seen were excellent. Pupils concentrate and work very hard, but also clearly enjoy religious education. The pace of most lessons is very brisk, with time, however, for pupils to read sections of information either from a textbook or from the Bible, think it through or write a response. Teachers, whose questioning techniques are very good, lead lively discussions very well, involving the majority of pupils in the class to give their opinions. Up-to-date information is used to further pupils' learning. For example, Year 10 used the newspapers' coverage of the high court case about a terminally ill woman, who was seeking to end her life. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, and this is one of the keys to the success of teaching and learning in the subject.

208. The department is very well led by a very experienced and knowledgeable teacher. Schemes of work are very good and closely linked to the locally Agreed Syllabus and the requirements of the examinations boards used. The team of teachers is very good, with a lively, professional approach that gives religious education a high profile in the school. It is an acknowledged subject, not simply a required addition, and teachers work hard to maintain very high standards in every aspect. Resources are very good, and the use of them for display in all religious education classrooms is excellent. Improvements since the last inspection are very good, in particular, the improvement in the standard of teaching; this was good last time, and is now very good or excellent. The subject contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, giving time for some reflection about some of life's problems, and the chance to find out about other faiths and cultures. This is a very successful subject, demonstrated in its outcomes and results across the age range of pupils. It continues to keep standards very high, through very good teaching and leadership.

PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000 and in two subjects in 2001.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English Literature	8	100	96	0	36	4.8	5.9
Mathematics	25	72	89	28	45	4.2	6.0
Physics	19	84	88	53	41	5.6	5.7
Chemistry	20	75	89	35	42	4.8	5.9
French	5	100	91	20	39	6.0	5.7
Geography (2001)	7	100	89	28.6	33	5.4	5.4
History	13	85	89	15	34	3.9	5.4
ICT (2001)	2	50	85	0	32	2.0	5.3
Business Studies	11	91	91	0	30	4.0	5.3

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

The school offers courses leading to mathematics and further mathematics at AS level and A2 level. The students taking advanced level mathematics study a combination of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. There is a re-sit GCSE course for those studying A level in other subjects who did not achieve a grade C in mathematics in Year 11. It is planned that the mathematics department will also provide teaching of application of number leading to key skills qualification for all sixth form pupils but this course has not yet begun.

Lessons in mechanics were seen for Year 12 and in pure mathematics for Year 13. One GCSE lesson was observed. Work from all courses was scrutinised and a representative sample of students interviewed.

Strengths

- Standards are high.
- Teaching is very good.
- The students' attitudes to their work and their teaching are very positive.
- Student numbers are buoyant.

Areas for improvement

- Enhanced provision should be made for pupils if they are to be permitted to embark upon A level courses with less than a grade B on a higher tier mathematics GCSE paper.
- Suitable textbooks and course material need to be made available to A2 level students as soon as possible.

209. GCE advanced level results for the year 2000 were disappointing in that they were below national averages. The department has considered closely why results were as they were and taken appropriate action to remedy the situation. 2001 results reflect this action and are representative of previous years when results have been much better. They compare favourably with results at the time of the last inspection. All except one of fourteen students in 2001 passed at A-level, with six obtaining an A grade. Four students took further mathematics. All were successful, with one grade A, two grade Bs and one grade D. All students entered for AS level were successful. For the most part more experienced and permanent members of the department teach the A level courses. This has meant that the sixth form has been sheltered, to a large extent, from staffing difficulties, which have affected the main school. The policy adopted of admitting students to study advanced mathematics courses in the sixth form who have studied the intermediate rather than the higher level paper for GCSE, and of students who have obtained only a grade C, leads to weaker results. These students need enhanced induction arrangements if they are to come to terms with advanced level work effectively, and the department has now put strategies in place to offer such support.
210. The standard of work seen was above national norms, as one might expect from the examination results. Higher-attaining students in Year 13 handle the calculus with confidence. There is good work in their folders on centre of mass, variable acceleration and projectiles. Further mathematics students show they can solve first and second order differential equations, and that they understand the use of a complementary function and a particular integral to find a general solution. They do good work with De Moivre's theorem. Students in Year 12, at the beginning of their sixth form studies, are coming to terms effectively with trigonometric equations and identities. Those beginning on the course from a lower starting base find difficulty with surds, equations and coordinate geometry, although most are reasonable competent and confident in this respect.
211. Pupils in the sixth form progress well, and almost all students achieve in line with or better than expectation. Those few students starting from a relatively low skill and knowledge base do not always reach expectation. Consideration needs to be given as to how best these students are to be supported if the school policy is to continue to be that of recruiting those with less than grade B on the higher GCSE paper onto AS level courses.
212. GCSE students produce a good volume of work and are making satisfactory progress building upon and improving what they have learned for GCSE in Year 11. Their work in their folders, and what they say in discussion, shows that most are capable of achieving the grade C that they seek. This reflects results in recent years.
213. Teaching is good for advanced level studies and satisfactory elsewhere. Advanced level lessons are informed by teachers' very good knowledge and understanding. Marking and detailed support in the pupils' files of work are also very good. Excellent lesson planning and a good level of challenge are hallmarks of the teachers' work. The teachers are enthusiastic about mathematics and this enthusiasm is passed on to many of the students. One lesson in particular excited the pupils' interest. The teaching was excellent and made very good use of a multimedia projector and a graphical software package on a laptop computer to display the development of ideas relating to functions.
214. The students feel very well supported by their teachers. They feel free to approach them when they are in difficulties and value their generosity with their time providing extra help outside of lessons. Regular testing aids their understanding and learning. The arrangements made for target setting and review for the statistics courses are a particular strength. They are understandably concerned that the textbooks for the new advanced level courses they are

studying have not yet been published. This is through no fault of the school. The courses are new and this support is not yet available.

215. The management of the mathematics department is satisfactory. The teachers are enthusiastic and pull together as a team. The marking and assessment of students' work is thorough and effective. The students commented on this as being very helpful to them in helping them to identify their own weaknesses and improve. The professional development provided for younger teachers before they embark on teaching at advanced level is a strong feature ensuring that the high quality of sixth form teaching is maintained. But the arrangements for supporting teachers by monitoring their work is unsatisfactory in spite of being highlighted as an issue for development in the last inspection report. Recruitment into the sixth form for mathematics is very healthy. There are currently 35 students for mathematics in Year 12, eleven of whom are studying further mathematics at advanced supplementary level.

Physics

Overall, the quality of provision in physics is **good**.

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching.
- Very good subject expertise.
- Well-planned physics curriculum.
- Good assessment of students' capabilities.
- Good management of the subject

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- More structured teaching of mathematical aspects of physics.

216. Results in examinations at the end of Year 13 were average in 2000. Results in 1999 were also average but were well above average in 1998. Results in 2001 improved considerably compared with 2000. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in these examinations.
217. Standards seen in the work of students were average overall. Standards in the work of students at the end of Year 13 seen during the inspection were average. This indicates that the students' achievement in physics is satisfactory compared with their prior attainment on starting the physics course. For example, Year 13 students understand the difference between radial and parallel gravitational fields. They can successfully use their understanding to calculate the difference in gravitational potential energy between two points close to the earth's surface. Theoretical concepts such as the Ideal Gas Laws are well understood and mathematical skills are improving. Students were able to relate changes in the movement of the particles of the ideal gases to changes in temperature and pressure. Standards in the work of students at the end of Year 12 observed during the inspection were also average. Students have a sound and improving understanding of theories such as the refraction of light through a medium other than air; and how the internal resistance of cells has effects on their electromotive potential. The clarity of explanation of these concepts on the part of the teachers resulted in the students making good progress in their understanding during lessons. Practical and investigative skills are average overall but steadily improve across Years 12 and 13. For example, Year 12 students were able to successfully calculate, from their experimental work, the refractive index of glass. Their results for the refractive index compared well with published data. Achievement across Years 12 and 13 for students as a whole is satisfactory.
218. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and explain concepts in physics clearly and logically. Lessons are well planned and practical work is an essential part of the learning process. However, some lessons, generally of the more theoretical type, tend to be didactic in nature resulting in some students being passive learners in this situation. Formal assessments are helpfully marked enabling students to understand how they are progressing and how to improve. However, due to the interactive ICT nature of the course, students are provided

with so much extra work in physics that inevitably some of this material goes unmarked. This results in students not being clear about the standard they have reached in this work. There is a very good emphasis on independent learning skills, and students are provided with an interactive CD-ROM that gives them access to all elements of the physics course. Teachers have very good supportive relationships with students which helps the students learn more effectively.

219. Students have very good attitudes towards their work and this leads to good learning overall. They are mature and well disposed in their approach to learning. They are interested in their work and always listen carefully to explanations from their teachers. They are appreciative of the help given them by their teachers. However, they would welcome a more structured approach to the teaching of mathematical concepts in physics so that they could progress faster.
220. Since the previous inspection the department has made satisfactory improvement. The retention rate of students in post-16 physics courses is good, indicating a positive attitude towards physics. The management of physics is good. The curriculum is well planned and meets the students' needs well. The management of learning through the physics schemes of work is good. Assessment is rigorous and accurately measures the students' capabilities. Examination results are improving and students' achievement is satisfactory. However there is no formal monitoring of teaching and learning to share good practice. Learning objectives are not always explicitly stated. The amount of work provided for students needs to be rationalised so that it all can be adequately assessed.

Chemistry

The focus in inspection was on chemistry and physics but biology was also sampled. One lesson was observed. The teaching in this lesson was very good with students making very good progress in their studies as the result of very good planning and effective learning strategies on the part of the teacher.

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is **good**.

Strengths

- Very good specialist knowledge of the subject.
- Very good working relationships with students.
- Consistently good teaching.
- Good assessment of students' work and progress.
- Good management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Use of ICT in lessons.

221. Results in examinations at the end of Year 13 were below average in 2000. Results over the last three years have fluctuated around the national average. However, in 2001, results improved considerably. The performance of boys and girls in these examinations varies from year to year depending on the nature of the particular cohort taking the examination. The attainment of students starting the chemistry course in Year 12 is broadly in line with the course requirements. Standards seen in the work of students were average overall. Standards in the work of students at the end of Year 13 observed in lessons and work scrutiny during the inspection were average. Their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their starting point at the beginning of the course and the grades they achieved in their GCSE science examinations. In Year 13, standards are average in inorganic, physical and organic chemistry. Practical skills, although average overall, are improving as a result of the good teaching in this area. For example, Year 13 students were able to successfully measure pH-curves for a number of acid-base titrations. They did this with a good degree of accuracy as a result of attention to detail in the planning of the experiments. Careful explanation of the concepts involved and the associated safety issues by the class teacher ensured that the students learned well during the lesson. Students were developing their analytical skills in chemistry well. Standards in the work of students at the end of Year 12 observed during the inspection were also average and represent satisfactory achievement. In inorganic chemistry students are acquiring a good knowledge and understanding of the structure of solids and how this affects their properties. For example, they were able to explain to their

fellow students how the very different properties of diamond and graphite (as both are forms of carbon) depend upon their different structures.

222. Teaching and learning are good overall. Four lessons were observed during the inspection. Of these, one was very good and three were good. Students in their lessons work at a good rate and concentrate well on the task in hand. Year 12 and 13 students make good progress in their lessons as a result of consistently good teaching combined with very positive attitudes towards the subject. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of chemistry and explain key concepts with clarity resulting in better progress. For example, Year 12 students made good progress in their understanding of the effect of electro-negativity on inter-molecular forces. Very good planning by the teacher ensured that the students researched the topic well using a variety of ICT sources. They then presented their findings to their fellow students clearly so that all students made good progress in the topic. Management of the practical situation is good with teachers emphasizing safety issues suitably. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students appreciate the help that is given to them when they encounter difficulties in their studies.
223. Marking of students' work is regular and accurate and gives a good idea of the progress they are making in the subject. The tracking of students' performance and diagnosis of problem areas is very good. This improves students' overall performance. The assessment of the students' course work is rigorous and helps them understand their strengths and weaknesses in this target area.
224. Students are conscientious and hard working. They are well behaved and polite. Students are developing their personal learning skills well as a result of effective teaching strategies. They have very positive attitudes towards their work and this, combined with the consistently good teaching, helps them learn better. Students have some access to ICT both inside and outside their lessons but this is generally insufficient for their needs. They are developing good numerical skills through good teaching in this area, although some students struggled with the mathematical complexities involved in calculation of molarities in Redox reactions.
225. Since the previous inspection the department has made satisfactory improvement. The management of the subject is good. The teaching of the subject has improved. The quality and range of the chemistry curriculum is good. Modules of work are effective at delivering the chemistry curriculum and match the needs of the students well. The retention rate in the post-16 chemistry courses is satisfactory. Examination results have improved. However, there is no formal monitoring of teaching and learning that would further improve the quality of teaching and share good practice and maintain high standards.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

226. No subjects within this curriculum area were inspected in depth. Some current work in design and technology and art and design (textiles) was sampled and lessons seen. Results were from very small groups; high standards were seen in AS level art and design. Students' portfolios in textiles were of high quality. In the larger design and technology group in Year 13, recent work was below the expectations of the course, due to students not attaining sufficiently high standards by the end of Year 12

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Lessons in AS and A level ICT were seen in Years 12 and 13. In addition, the key skills provision was inspected.

Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Achievement in the new AS information systems course is good.
- Quality of post-16 teaching is good.

- Students are well motivated, and show commitment to the course.
- The subject is soundly led; the teachers work well as a team.
- Achievement in using ICT in media studies is very good.

Areas for Improvement

- Raising standard of students' key skills in ICT.
- Continuing to improve teachers' knowledge of new courses and lesson planning to further meet students' individual needs.
- Provision of suitable faster computers.

227. The subject was not part of the post-16 curriculum during the last inspection and there were no results in examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2000. In 2001, the group size was too small to make any comparisons or form a trend.
228. Standards in the work of students at the end of Years 12 and 13 observed during the inspection were below the expectations of the course. This is largely due to the policy of admitting some students who do not have a strong background in ICT in Years 10 and 11. Students have a satisfactory understanding of some of the advanced features of spreadsheets and databases. When meeting new material, such as a computer modelling of a traffic light system, they show sound comprehension of principles. Some students are not confident using features such as 'nested If' statements and macros. Boys achieve higher standards than girls. Two gifted and talented students produce above average course work and are able to work with considerable independence. In Year 13, students can confidently research their own projects, and initial research work shows satisfactory planning at this point in the course.
229. Achievement across Years 12 and 13 for students as a whole is good. However, many students who do not use ICT in their subject choices are not progressing beyond using basic use of word processing or simple searches on the Internet. In subjects such as media studies, achievement is very good, with many able to use advanced desktop publishing and video editing software. The achievement of gifted and talented students is good in information systems.
230. Teaching is good. The two staff members sharing groups are quickly adapting their teaching methods to suit the requirements of the new course. They have improved their planning, making use of their experiences of last year's teaching and recent training courses. They have made key decisions, such as changing the examination board to meet needs of students. Planning is good with effective teamwork in the department, drawing on a good range of reference materials to plan lessons and create new resources. Students are well managed – good relationships are building in Year 12, and staff act in a consultant role in Year 13, facilitating independent development of projects. Assessment is again meticulous with individual targets set and reviewed regularly.
231. Learning is good, as teachers' materials match the needs of most of the group. However those new to the subject, and gifted and talented students, are a continuing challenge in maintaining effective teaching.
232. Management of AS and A2 courses is good. Organization of the key skills course is not effective. Students do not regularly attend the teacher workshop sessions. Hardware for post-16 courses is barely adequate, impacting on learning in one lesson. The speed of the computers is too slow.
233. Students have positive views about their courses. They are receiving good feedback on their progress.

BUSINESS

Business Studies

The inspection focused exclusively on the provision of the subject in the sixth form. Business studies is offered at both GCE A level and AS level. Business studies is no longer offered as a vocational oriented subject. The last inspection report makes no reference to business education.

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Good pupil response in all lessons.
- Good overall teaching that emphasises appropriate standards for success.
- Frequent, helpful oral feedback to students on their current work.

Areas for Improvement:

- More rigorous management of the department
- The curriculum needs to be widened to include the vocational aspects of the subject.
- The adoption of standard procedures and format for written feedback. Provision for gifted students to be strengthened.

234. At GCSE A level, results in public examinations over the last two years, when no candidate attained either a grade A or B, are below the standards attained in similar schools nationally. The AS results for 2001 show a similar picture. However, in Years 12 and 13, standards of attainment seen in classes are often in line with, or even, occasionally, higher than the national expectations. For example, Year 12 students, in their studies of business plans, not only describe effectively the key ingredients of successful business plans but also draw well on their own work experience to enhance their understanding. Students' written skills lags behind their oral skills.
235. Teaching is good overall, with the occasional excellent lesson. Lessons are well organised, briskly run and supported by appropriate resources. Structures for subsequent work and necessary data are built up clearly during lessons. Themes and learning previously encountered are drawn upon frequently. For example, in the excellent lesson with Year 13, the teacher used her own and the students' experience of work to deepen their knowledge and understanding, and her careful, probing questions took students to new levels of self-evaluation of their current work. This led to students applying intellectual rigour to their studies.
236. The response of students is good. Students work particularly well with both their fellows and their teachers. They approach their work in a very positive and lively manner and remain engaged even when the tasks are difficult.
237. Gifted pupils are insufficiently identified or catered for. The curriculum provision of the subject is too narrow. The previously successful vocational courses of study are no longer offered. The head of department has a vision for the future of the subject but that vision must be matched by a more rigorous and more determined leadership and management style, since that currently obtaining is unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Overall provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and teachers make good use of their detailed subject knowledge to provide students with a considerable amount of material.
- The fieldwork aspects of the course are good and enable students to extend their key skills alongside their geographical advancement.
- Boys' GCE results in 2001 are high.
- There are good relationships that help students feel secure and confident in teachers.

Areas for Improvement

- Too often, students are passive in class and are not developing their thinking skills enough or challenging the received wisdom.
- Although target setting is becoming established, targets are not sharply enough focused on specific learning goals.

238. Results in examinations at the end of Year 13 were below, but close to, the national average in 2001. The results of the boys were much better than those for girls and the boys were well above the national average. All students achieved a grade. It is clear, from their GCSE results that almost all students perform as expected. A few perform slightly better and a small proportion underachieve. The department is aware of these individual students and has credible explanations

for their performances. In previous years, the results have been above the national average and in 1999 they were well above average. No students took geography examinations in 2000.

239. Standards in the work of students at the end of Year 13, observed during the inspection, were average but better than those produced by the previous year group. Students make good use of technical vocabulary and are comfortable with terms that are used to understand regional disparities. Many have a limited general background that hinders them from developing the ideas tackled in class. The Year 12 lesson using role-play was good but students did not really rise to the occasion because of their limited knowledge of the regions of Britain. They develop good study skills and accumulate a vast amount of factual material. The course is well planned to integrate the development of key skills. The work on Clumber Park provides good opportunities for students to gain confidence in presenting their work orally.
240. Achievement across Years 12 and 13 for students as a whole is good. The higher-attaining students make satisfactory progress but are not extended as much as they could be in order to achieve the higher grades. In all lessons there are clear gains in factual knowledge and in handling data. However, many students are reluctant to take more responsibility for their own learning, or to read widely around the topics, and are happy for teachers to do more of the work than is desirable.
241. Teaching is good. The teachers are very well prepared and are good guides through the vast amount of material that they provide for students. They have very good up-to-date knowledge of geography and a clear understanding of the demands of GSE examinations. They are aware of the needs of individual students and provide encouragement and support. They are sometimes hesitant about making students take responsibility for their learning and a lot of pre-digested material is provided. Homework is well planned and contributes to the good learning of students by providing time for some research.
242. Students learn well. This is especially true where they are dealing with factual material and in the development of learning skills. It is less good over the longer term when students have to cope with extended writing, argument and reasoning. In all lessons they concentrate well and complete work as required but they rarely tax the teachers intellectually. On the occasions when students do question and challenge, their learning is more exciting and teachers are more effective. The students are well behaved and sensible and they make lessons pleasant. They are compliant and charming rather than intellectually thrusting. There are good relationships between students and staff and these help to support learning.
243. The management is good and the sixth form team is well led. Teachers work well together and are committed to improvements. The use of ICT is somewhat limited although many students make good individual use of the Internet. Target setting is becoming established, although targets are not yet sharply enough focused on specific learning goals.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Teachers set work that is appropriately demanding.
- Teachers expect students to form and justify their own views.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge helps students to make satisfactory progress.
- Students have a mature and positive approach to their work.

Areas for improvement:

- Students' attainment in both AS and A2 examinations.
- Lack of sufficient research facilities in the sixth form or history study areas.
- Students' selection of relevant material for inclusion in essays.
- Students' knowledge, understanding and accurate use of correct terminology

244. There has been a steady decline in overall attainment in GCSE A level since the last report, and the results in 2001 (as in 2000) were well below the national average. The proportion of students who gain the highest grades (A or B) is significantly below average. Students tend to perform worse in history than in their other subjects. The results in the AS level examination, which students took for the first time in 2001, were below the (provisional) national average.
245. Students currently taking the subject in Years 12 and 13 produce a standard of work, in class and in their essays, that is in line with course requirements. The small group of students in Year 13, for example, successfully select and synthesise information from a range of textual sources to build up their own views and opinions, which they then express clearly in essays. They understand well that historians do not always agree about past events and they successfully evaluate the different views. Their work on sources indicates a good level of understanding of analysis and evaluation. Oral responses in discussions are generally good and many argue a point convincingly. A minority, however, find it quite difficult to express themselves well in writing.
246. Students in Year 12 achieve the standard expected in the course. Their progress is satisfactory. They show at least sound knowledge and understanding of the events they study. They understand and explain the significance of events and actions. Essays showed good understanding of long- and short-term causes and their relative importance, although some essays clearly indicate the lack of additional background reading. However, in independent research and the subsequent follow up oral work, such as that undertaken on the civil rights movement in the United States, students show a confidence in their own ability and a precision and clarity of expression. In both these aspects of their studies students achieve well and attain standards that are higher than those normally seen at this stage of their studies. In both Years 12 and 13 students do not read sufficiently widely in the subject and the subsequent lack of deeper knowledge affects their attainment in examinations.
247. Teaching is good overall and contributes much to students' progress early on in their courses in Years 12 and 13. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they communicate effectively. Teaching methods provide students with opportunities to research, form their own views and then justify them, either orally or in writing. The work set is appropriately challenging and matched well to the requirements of the examinations. Work is mainly marked to examination criteria. The emphasis in some lessons is on students working as independent learners and not relying on their teachers simply giving them information. This should be more encouraged. Teachers rightly emphasise and encourage students' oral contributions to lessons and give them good opportunities for oral work. In most lessons, teachers insist on students using correct terminology accurately when they speak. Occasionally, however, students' errors are not corrected and they continue to use incorrect vocabulary.
248. Students learn well. They generally bring a very positive approach to their work and show interest, enthusiasm and a commitment to hard work. They are mostly well prepared for lessons, completing homework as required. As a result, teachers can move on to new work effectively. They respond well to the challenges set by their teachers. A commitment to work and a wish to improve underpin their response to lessons. Students' work as independent learners is restricted, however, by the poor provision in the library. The number and range of books available to them are much too small for them to read widely and acquire the depth of understanding needed to gain top grades. Their ability to make use of ICT and the Internet for research is restricted by the small number of up-to-date computers and a lack of Internet access in the sixth form or history study area, although they do have access to the Internet elsewhere in the school.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

The focus was on English literature, but English language was also sampled. In English language, examination results were below average in 2000 and students did not do as well as might be expected considering their GCSE results. In 2001, results were average and students did as well as might be expected considering their GCSE results. Two good lessons were observed. In one, good use of the

Internet for researching current concerns about English spelling effectively deepened students' knowledge of and interest in the subject.

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Subject knowledge is very good and methods are varied, which effectively help students to build up their knowledge and understanding.
- Students think for themselves and have confidence in their own ideas.
- Students are well motivated in the classroom.
- Relationships are very good. Mutual respect between teachers and pupils fosters good working relationships.
- Marking is excellent; students know their strengths and weaknesses.

Areas for improvement

- Students lack the breadth of knowledge that comes from extensive reading and experiences of the theatre.
- There is too much absence, and students do not catch up sufficiently well with work missed.
- Students do not always develop their ideas in sufficient depth.

249. Results in examinations at the end of Year 13 were satisfactory in 2000 and 2001. Too few students took the examination to make national comparisons valid, but students did as well as might be expected considering their GCSE results. No students achieved the highest grades, but all achieved grades C and D in 2000, and grades C, D and E in 2001. Results were very good in 1999. Far fewer boys than girls choose to take the course and their results are in line with those of the girls.

250. Standards of the work of students observed during the inspection in Year 12 at this early stage of the course are below average. In Year 13, they are average. Only nine students elected to take the subject last year, and seven remain. Numbers have risen to over 30 this year, a reflection of the subject's popularity. In Years 12 and 13, students are encouraged to think independently and support their own ideas. In Year 13, students can deliver a talk to their peers, for instance on 'The Dubliners', which shows good knowledge of the text and an understanding of themes and imagery. They can make comparisons across the stories and link Joyce to other writers they have studied. They are able to make creative suggestions, based on the text, about how 'Dr Faustus', might be produced on stage. However, apart from the highest-attaining students, their responses are restricted by their lack of breadth of knowledge, for instance in their limited reading outside the set texts and their lack of experience of the theatre. Only one girl out of the seven students in Year 13 had a 100 per cent attendance record, and students had not caught up with work missed before returning to the lessons. In written work, students do not extend their ideas in sufficient depth. In Year 12, students are interested and work hard, but they struggle to understand complex language such as that of John Keats' poetry, the boys especially. They do think for themselves and can analyse rather than just narrate.

251. Achievement across Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory. Students make good progress in lessons, but achievement is satisfactory over the course as a whole for both boys and girls and the gifted and talented. The emphasis on group work and thinking for themselves results in students developing a great interest in their work and asking and answering questions with intellectual curiosity. When weaknesses are identified, such as confusion in how to go about developing an essay, teachers and students work well together to improve. Pupils were given a very helpful model answer that they could study and then continue in the same style. This developed their understanding well.

252. Teaching is very good and learning is good. Learning is very good in lessons, less so when the wider aspects of learning are taken into account. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Their interest and enthusiasm for the subject, and their use of a good variety of methods, stimulate students' intellectual effort and they work very hard in lessons. Students were very

interested in the various interpretations possible for a scene from 'Dr Faustus', and their questioning of events led to a fuller understanding of Marlowe's intentions. The marking of written work and the ongoing assessment of understanding in lessons are excellent. Students know their targets and their strengths and weaknesses. Essays have very detailed and helpful analyses, which give pupils much appreciated help in how they can improve. Homework is regularly set and used to extend students' experiences. For instance, students had to examine Shelley and Wordsworth in their study of Keats. However, this broadening of their experiences does not go far enough.

253. Leadership and management are good. More cohesive schemes of work are in the process of development. Weaknesses have been identified and strategies are being developed to address them; for example, the problem students have in developing their ideas sufficiently in essays.
254. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards remain in line with the requirements of the course. Teachers no longer talk too much, but encourage pupils to voice their own opinions at all times, thus establishing very positive relationships in the classroom.

MODERN LANGUAGES

The focus was on French, but Spanish was also sampled. In Spanish, examination results in 2000 were below average, but students did as expected considering their GCSE results. There were no candidates in 2001. One Year 13 lesson was observed. The very good teaching included the consistent delivery of Spanish, a supportive approach to the middle-attaining students and a good range of learning activities. This led to students gaining a sound knowledge of ETA terrorism, although some students did not take enough notes for secure learning of new vocabulary. The Year 12 course in Japanese could not be formally observed. Documentary evidence shows that students do well and achieve a Certificate in Japanese.

French

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- In 2000, A-level results for very small numbers were above average.
- Teaching is good and lessons are well planned.
- Students in Year 13 speak French consistently and make good progress in acquiring new vocabulary.
- Students have good support from the foreign language assistant in their independent learning.

Areas for improvement

- Less talented students in Year 12 do not have individual learning targets to build up their skills.
- Students do not keep monitored logs of their independent study.
- Too much English is used in a few lessons.

255. In 2000, A level results were above average, but the number of entries was too low for significant comparisons with national averages. Students achieved well in relation to their performance in other subjects and all passed. All the students were girls. In 2001, the results dipped, but all students (three girls and two boys) passed except one. At AS level all students passed except two. Three students have not yet validated their AS grades and three gained A, D and E grades.
256. Standards of work are average overall in AS and A2. However, in Year 13, standards of work are above average. Students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they worked well as a result of effective teaching that demanded much of them. Students very quickly focus on new language areas and vocabulary. They recall learnt words very well and one talented student writes well with flair and good fluency. They can express their ideas and opinions well in both written and spoken forms.

257. Standards of work in Year 12 are below average. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but most are making satisfactory progress in written work. They are moving on from GCSE fairly successfully into new areas, but some are quicker than others in tackling new vocabulary and grammar. The more talented incorporate new words well into their writing and speaking activities, but other students are much slower and lack any real confidence in expressing themselves or tackling wider topics, such as life and society. In a lesson on marriage and the family, a few students were very reluctant to participate or contribute any opinions at all. These students need a lot of support and practise outside lessons on simple themes if they are to overcome their hesitancy.
258. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge of French, and students learn best in the good and challenging lessons where French is used consistently. Of the four lessons seen, two were not as dynamic as the others, nor was French used as much. The principal features of the good lessons were the consistent use of French, good pace and good planning, including varied activities. In one lesson on literature, the very good planning of the reading and speaking activities was enabling students to gain a detailed knowledge of the French novel they were reading. In another lesson, the teacher encouraged students well to give their opinions on television soaps and then the French assistant contributed her interesting review of developments in French soaps. However, in the lessons where too much English was used, and where objectives were less clearly focused, students learned less well and did not make as much progress as they should have done. Good pace in the delivery of French was not always maintained. Students need this training consistently in order to move on to easily understand the rapid delivery of the native speakers they hear on tape. Students are not required to keep a log of their independent study. This aspect could be monitored by the teacher or language assistant.
259. Much of the written work demanded of students takes the form of grammar study, language manipulation and essays. Students have marked some of this work in class themselves under the guidance of teachers. Other work, mostly essays, is marked very closely by the teacher, and assessments are done carefully to the examination board's mark scheme. This gives the students a clear idea of how well they are doing. However, they are not required to correct or redraft their work as part of the learning process.
260. Students learn satisfactorily overall. They are attentive, and most work productively and respond well to the different learning styles they experience. Year 13 students and some of the more talented in Year 12 enjoy contributing to class discussion, especially when they are supplied with the vocabulary in an organised way, so that they can express their opinions freely. The less talented find it hard to participate in oral work in Year 12 because of their difficulty in absorbing new vocabulary at a fast rate. Because the groups are relatively small, little pair or group work was seen, but these less talented students would benefit from more opportunities to talk and listen to each other maturely in pairs, as part of their learning.
261. Opportunities for independent oral work are good. Students report that the French assistant extends and supports their oral work very well in the small group sessions with her once a week. Lessons take place in a pleasant room mainly reserved for sixth form work. Students do independent work for assignments and have good access to the Internet in the library. Year 12 students also have readers for extra reading and copies of the textbook tape for individual listening at home. Some of the independent work is logged and monitored, but not all.
262. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. The revision of the AS scheme of work to make sixth form work more accessible to a wider range of ability than in the previous year has been well managed. Teachers are committed to improving standards. Target setting, based on careful analysis of students' performance in homework and tests, is becoming well established, although targets are not focused sharply enough on specific learning goals, which are particularly necessary for the less talented students.